APPARITIONS

OF

OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

Translated from the Second French Edition.

APPARITIONS

OF

OUR LADY

OF LOURDES

AND

PARTICULARS CONCERNING

THE LIFE OF BERNADETTE,

AND THE PILGRIMAGE

SINCE THE APPARITIONS DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIME.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

REVEREND FATHER MARCEL BOUIX,

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS,

BY

THOMAS LAYTON, A. M., M. D., P.,

KNIGHT OF ST. GREGORY.

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NEW ORLEANS, FEAST OF CHRISTMAS, 1878.

Most Reverend NAPOLEON J. PERCHÉ,

Archbishop of New Orleans.

YOUR GRACE:

I hope there is no indiscretion in presenting for Your Grace's acceptance and patronage, my proposed translation of a recent French work by the Reverend Father Marcel Bouix, S. J., entitled: "*Apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes, etc.*"

Many reasons urge me to take this step: your fervent devotion to the most Blessed Virgin; the consecration of the archdiocese to Our Lady of Lourdes, which took place under your auspices; the great desire you have always manifested for the diffusion of good books: all these considerations, waiving even the duty of a son towards his spiritual father, would point out to me the propriety of my determination.

Your Grace appreciates, highly, as I have been informed, the importance of the work I have undertaken to translate. It is not a mere narration of the various apparitions which took place twenty years ago; they are alluded to in a condensed form; but besides this, the book gives many details concerning the different miracles which have been wrought subsequently, and the great catholic manifestations since the pilgrim age has been established; and, especially concerning the ceremony of the crowning, in 1876, of the most

Blessed Virgin by the representative of the Sovereign Pontiff Pius IX. This ceremony, of 1876, is looked upon as the most imposing in modern times; and Your Grace, who had the privilege of participating in it, will readily agree with the general opinion expressed on the occasion: that outside of Rome, never did any religious manifestation surpass the splendor and magnificence of that solemnity.

The book before us, containing such beautiful details, cannot but be interesting to the reader; and above all, the perusal of its pages is well calculated to give us an insight into the mysterious ways of the Providence of God, who makes use of the weakest instruments to accomplish the greatest designs of mercy and love.

May the divine mother, and glorious Saint Joseph, whom we contemplate, this day, in the stable of Bethlehem, at the feet of the Infant Jesus, obtain from Him the supernatural gift of intelligence for the readers of this work.

Trusting that favor will be granted to them; and asking for this undertaking and for all dear to me, Your Grace's blessing, I remain,

Your devoted son in Christ,

THOMAS LAYTON, A. M., M. D., P.

Knight of Saint Gregory.

J. M. J.

ARCHIEPISCOPAL RESIDENCE,

New Orleans, Feast of the Epiphany, 1879.

THOMAS LAYTON, A. M...M. D. P.,
Knight of Saint Gregory.

DEAR SON:

I heartily take under my patronage the translation you intend to publish of the book of Reverend Father Marcel Bouix, S. J., entitled: "*Apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes, etc.*"

During my recent illness, I read with great interest and edification, the first edition of this book, of which I see with pleasure, a second and greatly improved edition has already been published.

I have always encouraged the translation into English of those religious and useful books, which are so numerous in the French language; and I wish all our fellow citizens, who are able to do so, would help us in the diffusion of the faith by writing or translating interesting books conformable to sound doctrine; in order to counteract the venom of those impious and immoral, or at least, frivolous books, which are disorganizing our modern societies.

Giving my blessing both to you and to your work, I remain, dear son,

Your devoted and affectionate father in Christ,

† N. J. PERCHÉ,
Archbishop of New Orleans.

PREFACE.

The Right Reverend Bishop Laurence the immortal Prelate of Tarbes was succeeded by the Right Reverend Bishop Langénieux, who in the name of his diocese presented the Holy Father with a Grotto of Lourdes, the artistic execution of which was perfect.

In 1874 Pius the ninth said to the Right Reverend Bishop Langénieux: "In the Vatican palace there is a sanctuary, wherein dwells the Blessed Sacrament, and to which the Pope alone has access. Here, in the presence of Jesus Christ he spends four hours every day praying and reciting his breviary. It is to this retreat, that he resorts, when the iniquities of men so overburthen his heart, as to cause him to shed tears .....And it is here, that the Representation of Our Lady of Lourdes shall be placed (1)."

And on the 19th of February 1874 Our Lady of Lourdes was welcomed by Pius IX with filial devotion, and installed by him in this privileged sanctuary, where she was surrounded by the most precious relics in the world.

She who had said: "I am the Immaculate Conception" came to him, who had defined this dogma. She became the inhabitant and the Sovereign of the Vatican.

(1) Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes.

From that moment, it was at the feet of Our Lady of Lourdes that Pius IX prayed and held council with Jesus Christ with reference to all the interests of the church.

In order to show the extent of his veneration for the Virgin of the Pyrenees and to excite all nations to share in his devotion, Pius IX, in 1876, crowns Our Lady of Lourdes and consecrated the basilica erected in her honor.

By the hands of his official representative in France, he placed the crown upon her head, and by the ministry of the Cardinal of Paris, he consecrates the basilica.

Pius IX and the Church Militant are at Lourdes on these solemn occasions, the most magnificent of this century, after those of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and of the triumph of the œcumenical council; thirty-five Archbishops and Bishops having at their head the Papal Delegate and the Cardinal of Paris, three thousand pr ests; religious of all orders; more than one hundred thousand catholics; come together from the old world and the new: such were the witnesses to the coronation of the Virgin by Pius IX.

After this supreme sanction, this solemn act on the part of the Sovereign Pontiff; after the acclamations of those one hundred and twenty thousand catholic voices which rent the air, at the moment when Our Lady of Lourdes was crowned; in a word, after twenty years of pilgrimages and miracles, there is no need of further investigations as to the apparitions of the Im-

maculate Virgin. For catholics, the truth of these apparitions remains a forever established fact.

In this devotion, Pius IX is our leader, he gives us the example: it is for us to follow and to imitate him.

Multitudes, raised up by a divine afflatus, congregate from every land at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes: let us unite ourselves with them in going to implore the all powerful intercession and the clemency of the mother of God. That is, however, not sufficient: let us take her cause valiantly into our hands, and let us put forth all our exertions to propogate devotion to Mary.

In the plan of Divine Providence, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and devotion to the immaculate Conception of Mary, are the two great currents of grace, which, are henceforth destined to sanctify nations. God, abounding more and more in mercies, has reserved these two devotions for the later ages of the world. He says to the Church Militant: "Plant in every land the standard of Jesus Christ showing His heart inflamed with love for men, and the standard of the immaculate Virgin, as she appeared at Lourdes, and under this double banner you will conquer!"

Thus, Our Lady of Lourdes will be Our Lady of Mercy and pardon, our Lady reconciling nations with God, and Our Lady of Victory! For, in saying: "I am the Immaculate Conception," she says also: "I am the Virgin who forever crushed the head of the serpent."

Queen of heaven and earth and our mother, she tells us from the summit of the rock in the Pyrenees: "I have chosen this sanctuary as my favorite abode; and

from this throne, I will extend my sceptre over France, I will watch over that most christian kingdom, I will preserve its faith, I will defend it against heretical influences and against the powers of hell; I will extend my mantle of clemency over Europe and over the world, and I will be the salvation of peoples."

Such is the future before us, and which the Hilary of Poitiers of our day announced in the following terms on the day of the coronation of the Virgin:

"The event at Lourdes, the wonders of the Holy Grotto and of the Sacred Fountain, and manifestations such as those of yesterday and to-day have taught the world that God, God in person, is still in the midst of Israel: *Et Scietis quia in medio Israel Ego Sum:* Himself, the Lord, the Master who does not abdicate, who cannot be dethroned, Himself outside of whom and in whose absence there no longer exists anything: *Ego Dominus Deus vester, et non est amplius;* and in this manner, He has inspired us with confidence that His people are not always to be given up to that confusion which appears to hang over them at the present time: *Et non confundetur populus meus in aeternum;* and that for France, particularly, there will come a day of healing, of undoing of wrongs, of resurrection. "Certainly, if individual infirmities are miraculously cured every day can it be more difficult for God to effect, or for the mother of God to obtain the healing of christian society, that daughter of Abraham, who can not possibly remain tied down by the bonds with which she is fettered at the present time, unless a powerful blow is to be struck at the very cause of the Almighty

here below: *Hanc autem filiam Abrahæ, quam alligavit Satanas, non oportuit solvi vinculo isto?*

"It is this hope, my Lords and my Brethren, it is this firm and confident expectation of delivery which will abide with every one of us as the result of this solemnity."

We have already said, that after the coronation of the Virgin by Pius IX, and after twenty years of miracles, controversy is no longer possible among catholics.

Thus, the starting point for the author, who, in our day, writes concerning Our Lady of Lourdes, is the universal belief in the truth of the apparitions. Freeing therefore his recital from any and all controversial issues, he is enabled to render its progress more rapid; and at the same time, he enjoys the privilege of gaining a deeper insight into, and of exposing with more detail the dogmatic side of his subject. We have followed this plan. We have, above all, endeavored to make the Blessed Virgin known; with this end in view we have summarized the teaching of the fathers of the church, of the doctors and eminent theologians.

After having listened to such lofty teaching, the christian cannot but feel inflamed with the desire of chaining himself to the service of the most holy mother of God, whom no one can know without loving. And the fact of loving and serving her, constitutes for the one thus favored, the certainty of eternal salvation.

Thanks to additional documents obtained by a second journey to Lourdes, the completion of our first publication has been rendered an easy task.

"It is useful, says Saint Augustin that certain books, even when they treat of the same questions, should be written by many authors, each in his own style, the faith of all being the same, in order that the subject, with which they deal, should reach the greatest number, its meaning coming home to some by one channel, and to others, by another:—*Utile est plures a pluribus fieri libros, diverso stylo non diversa fide, etiam de quæstionibus iisdem, ut ad plurimos res ipsa perveniat, ad alios sic, ad alios autem sic* (1)."

In adding a new work to the list of all those which are already in existence, we have therefore merely carried out the thought of that great doctor.

This book is also a tribute of gratitude to the most Blessed Virgin; we had promised it to her, at Lourdes, if she restored our health: She has hearkened to our prayer, and we deposit our *ex voto* in her sanctuary.

Here we must relate how it pleased God that we should make the acquaintance of Bernadette.

There was a tie linking us to the establishment which she joined; three of our own sisters were religious of the same congregation. This explains our labors at the mother-house of Nevers, where Bernadette has always resided since her departure from Lourdes in 1866.

For nearly a year, beginning in June 1871, our leisure hours were devoted to the publication of the new constitutions which Pius IX had just granted to the Sisters of Nevers, the writings of their founder, and the autobiography of Marcelline Pauper.

(1) De Trint. lib. 1, quoted by Mastrofini, preface. *De Deo Uno et Trino.*

It was then our privilege to know and to study Bernadette. Every thoughtful reader will instinctively perceive how useful it has proved to us, in writing concerning her public career, to have been, for so long a time, the witness of her hidden life in Jesus Christ.

From the very start, we thought of offering the first fruits of this undertaking to the apostolic laborers and to the christian virgins who immolate themselves for Jesus Christ in the missions.

The generous assistance of certain persons devoted to Our Lady of Lourdes has enabled us to send them this book strictly in the spirit with which it was written—that of an offering.

May the suave and holy imagery of the apparitions of the immaculate Virgin to Bernadette go forth then to console those apostolic souls, and to communicate to them a new ardor in causing Jesus Christ to be known and loved! May Our Lady of Lourdes reign in the midst of those distant peoples; may she possess amongst them sanctuaries destined to become centres of pilgrimage, and may she, therein, show herself to be as prodigal of graces and benefits as she is in her Pyrenean sanctuary! Such is our most deeply cherished aspiration.

Our sole motive in writing this book has been to take part, as far as in our power lay, in propagating the devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes.

And now, O Most Holy Virgin! I bless thee for the assistance which Thou hast twice extended to me, and for the favor, which I owe thee, of completing this second publication on the feast of thy holy name.

I humbly lay it at thy feet, and the greatest grace I beg of thee, is that there may be an everlasting link between thyself and thy unworthy servant.

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF MARY.

Paris, 15th September 1878.

DECLARATION BY THE AUTHOR.

Wishing to submit myself, heart and soul, to the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, I declare that I claim only a purely human belief in the extraordinary facts related in this book; and that if I make use of the term miracle, in qualifying a fact, it is only with the understanding that all the rights of the Church are expressly reserved.

APPARITIONS

OF

OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

CHAPTER I.

1844–1858 — How God prepares Bernadette for the mission to which He destines her.

For the execution of one of His grandest designs God hath chosen "the weak things of the world,..... and things that are not" (1), an humble girl born in obscurity and indigence. Those to whom she owes her life eke out a precarious existence. Her father Francis Soubirous is the lessee of a small mill; but as grain is at times scarce, he is occasionally compelled to hire himself out to service. Her mother, Louise Casterot, also every now and then works as a day laborer. They are not owners of anything in this world; but if they are bereft of earthly possessions, they are rich in celestial treasures. By their virtue and by their faith, they are worthy of being the parents of Bernadette. Al-

(1) S. Paul. 1 Cor., 1, 27..28.

though their names are synonimous with obscurity it self, and although humanly speaking, they should have remained forever ignored, nevertheless, thanks to the name of their daughter, they will go down to the most remote posterity; they will be blessed throughout the christian world; from generation to generation the cry of respect and envy will be: "Happy parents of Bernadette!"

It was on the 7th of January 1844, at Lourdes in the Department of the Upper Pyrenees, that this angelic creature came into the world. She was the oldest of nine children, five of whom plucked from the stem in early flower, went to join the heavenly choirs: the remaining four are still living. And here the marvellous dispensation of Providence already manifests itself! The mill, under whose shelter Bernadette was born, situated in a narrow valley to the north of the city fortress, is located opposite the site of the Basilica erected over the miraculous Grotto. Thus, from her most tender years, her glances will be directed towards those Massabielle rocks, where the immaculate Virgin awaits her, and where so many prodigies are to be accomplished. She is baptized under the names of Mary-Bernard, both prophetic of her destiny. The first reveals the bond which is to unite her to the Virgin immaculate; the second forecasts the fervor of her love for that Virgin, and the mission she is to fulfill. The middle ages, witnesses of the love borne by Saint Bernard towards the Blessed Virgin, accord to him the following title, through the lips of Dante: "Thy faithful Bernard, O Mary: *Il tuo fedel Bernardo*". It was reserved

to the nineteenth century to say, and to have its exclamations echoed along the ever advancing current of history: "Thy faithful Bernadette."

Saint Bernard through the unutterable power of his eloquence not only beholds entire nations prostrate at the foot of the altars of the Virgin, enkindling in souls the fires of devotion to Mary, but he also transports the West into the East in order to achieve the conquest of the sepulchre of Jesus Christ. Bernadette, by her love for the immaculate Virgin, will light up in souls the flame by which her own is consumed, and by the influence of her testimony she will set the Universe in motion towards the sanctuary of Lourdes.

Even from her most tender youth, it begins to be revealed that she is the chosen one of God and of the immaculate Virgin: she resembles an angel. With an aching heart, after having for seven months supplied her with nature's aliment, her mother is compelled to entrust her to the care of a nurse at Bartrès, a village in the neighborhood of Lourdes. Her happy disposition, her angelic form, her virtuous inclinations captivate the affections of her foster-parents. Thus it occurs, that, after having had her under their roof for fourteen months, they desire, that each year, according to local custom, she should spend a few days with them. And towards the close of 1857, they will succeed in obtaining that she may pay them a four months' visit, as will be seen later. Let us note immediately, that on the occasion of these yearly visits, and especially at the time of her last sojourn in their midst, Bernadette endeared herself to the inhabitants of Bartrès. All love

and revere her: they cannot behold her at prayer in their charming and pious church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, without being edified by her modesty, her recollection and her fervor.

The return of the child into the bosom of her own family after this absence of fourteen months causes great joy. Her happy pious dispositions are speedily remarked. Her mother, Louise Soubirons, her two aunts Mary Bernard Casterot, her god mother, and Lucy Casterot, both Sodalists of the Blessed Virgin, bring her up in a christian manner, they teach her her prayers, and instruct her how to recite the chaplet. On Sundays and holidays, along with her parents she attends the parish church of Lourdes, in which she was baptized. During mass and the offices of the church her behavior is modest, and she says her beads fervently. As soon as she becomes old enough, it is she who recites the family prayers.

It is remarked, that she does not begin before all are united and in their respective places.

But as it enters into the plan of God that Bernadette should remain in obscurity until she shall have reached the age of fourteen, after which, she is to stand forth in the midst of multitudes, His supreme wisdom screens her, beforehand, from all danger. He chooses that Bernadette shall be of frail body and small stature, so that when she will be fourteen years old, she will not be larger than other children of eleven or twelve.

The countless throngs, which are soon to surround her at Lourdes, will see in her only the exterior appear-

ance and the simplicity of a little girl of that age.

By means of an infirmity and of asthma from which she is to suffer from her most tender years to the end of her days, God has fortified her with an additional shield against the world and its dangers. Finally as a crowning barrier between herself and the world, He erects for her, the rampart of poverty and indigence.

In the child whom He wishes to associate in the fulfillment of His designs, God wishes only simplicity, candor, innocence. Therefore He shapes events in such a manner that Bernadette attains the fourteenth year of her age without either knowing how to read or write; and without having made her first communion. If on the one hand, He keeps her habitually suffering from asthma, by which her chest is oppressed; on the other, He renders her presence necessary in the household. Being the oldest child, she is obliged to act as nurse to her little brothers and sisters, especially when her mother leaves home for a day's work. For the above reasons she cannot go to school regularly; hence it is that she has advanced so far in years, without having as yet learned to read.

Thus do the early years of Bernadette glide by at Lourdes, in the bosom of her family. The Holy Ghost has watched over her under the shadow of the domestic hearth, and the immaculate Virgin has, at the early dawn of her faculties entranced her by the sweetness of her love. Thanks to this twofold protection, the soul of Bernadette has remained pure and has never been sullied by the poisoned breath of the age. As the youthful Mary Ann Parédés, a tender virgin who

sanctified herself in her own family circle, has been surnamed the Lily of Quito and of South America, so may the innocent Bernadette be called the Lily of Lourdes and of the Pyrenees.

In 1857, towards the beginning of September, the foster parents of Bernadette obtain leave for her to remain four months with them. In order to give her occupation, from time to time, they confide to her care the keeping of a small flock of sheep. Thus it happens that Bernadette—only however in this occasional way—performs the same duties which devolved upon Saint Germaine Cousin and Saint Geneviève during the whole of their lives. The reader will see too what degree of truth there is in the name of shepherdess, which writers have bestowed upon her. But during this stay of Bernadette at Bartrès, God gives her a more immediate preparation for her mission. Away from her family, from her native place, alone on these quiet hills, busied with the care of her little flock, the child is better disposed to receive the impressions of grace. In this solitude, God addresses Himself to her heart. The most Holy Virgin delights in augmenting the simplicity which she has enkindled in her soul from her most tender youth. And, on her side, Bernadette allows free play to her love for that divine mother. On these lonely hills she recites more chaplets than ever before, as though wishing to prepare a fitting prelude to those she is so soon to say at the miraculous Grotto. From that moment she became the object of the complacency of the most Blessed Virgin.

It could not but happen that surrounded by so many

favors, her beautiful soul should begin to hunger after the bread of life. This desire takes birth in her mind, when she sees other young girls of her age approaching the communion table. Bernadette sighs for the happy moment when she too may make her first communion. Meeting one day some one from Lourdes, she sends the following urgent message: "Please tell my parents to come for me, so that I may prepare myself for my first communion." The message is faithfully conveyed, and her parents hasten to respond to so legitimate a wish.

Such is the chosen one of God, the humble little girl whose assistance He is to use in one of the greatest manifestations of His mercies. She comes from plebean stock, she is of humble race; she is poorly clad; she is ignorant of worldly matters; she can neither read nor write; she can only speak the dialect used in the mountains, but in the order of grace, she is not of lowly origin, on the contrary she belongs to the highest ranks; under her tattered garments she is clad in the rich and holy trappings which adorn her soul. She knows nothing concerning this world, but she is already learned in that supreme science, the love of God. She is possessed of candor, innocence, simplicity, and straightforwardness, whose perfume delights the Most High. By her angelic life, by her unpretending and childish devotion to the most Blessed Virgin, she has already gained the forever enduring predilections of her heart.

Thus Bernadette is ready for the mission to which God destines her.

CHAPTER II.

11th February 1858. First apparition of the Most Blessed Virgin to Bernadette.

Towards the end of January 1858, Bernadette leaves Bartrès. According to her desire, her parents take her home to Lourdes, in order that under their own guidance, she may prepare to make her first communion. In the plan of Providence, however, four months are destined to pass before she may receive the Bread of Angels for the first time, and in the meanwhile, she is to accomplish her mission.

On the 11th February 1858, Thursday before Lent, is the day which God has chosen to initiate Bernadette into the great designs He has in store for her. But in order that the heart of the little girl may never become elated with pride, and in order that she may preserve an indelible recollection of her humble condition, of her indigence and of her feebleness, it pleases God to make her feel her dependence; He seems to bring together every circumstance, which may have the power of engraving upon her soul the lineaments of everlasting humility.

Her dwelling, at this time, is poverty itself. Her parents had rented the ground floor of a house, although they still continued to lease the little mill. In that humble abode which sheltered the entire Soubi-

rous family, Bernadette's room was an unpretending closet. It should be said, however, that this home is sanctified by the cross of Jesus Christ. The image of the most Blessed Virgin is there too, cheering in its aspect and giving elasticity of mind and heart, and thus this family is happy, despite its indigence: its members bless God. But besides this condition of poverty, Bernadette continues to suffer; she is harassed by her asthmatic attacks: all that her mother is able to do to relieve and protect her against the inclemency of the weather is to give her one pair of stockings, her sister Mary, three years her junior, being compelled to do without any, the only covering to her feet being wooden shoes. And to crown all, on that day, there is no wood in the house wherewith to prepare the frugal family meal. It was near midday. Bernadette, as courageous as she is loving, suddenly offers to go, with Mary, her sister, and another companion, and pick up the twigs which have dropped from the forest trees. On account of her suffering condition, her mother hesitates; at last she yields to her entreaties: "Well then my daughter," says she, "take your hood and go with your companions."

The fact of there being no firewood in the house, on this particular day, seemed to be for Bernadette only one of the trials to which in her poverty she had become accustomed; but in the mysterious dispensation of God, it was her first step towards the predestined sanctuary, where she was to witness so many wonders.

She starts out then with her two companions; they follow the left bank of the Gave, picking up the sticks which they find on their road.

They soon reach a spot opposite the Grotto, which has since become so famous. They are separated from it merely by an insignificant streamlet, which Bernadette's companions ford in their bare feet. Bernadette, tells them: "Throw down some big stones, so that I can keep dry whilst crossing." They answer: "Take off your stockings, and do as we are doing"; and they enter the Grotto in order to bind their little bundle of twigs.

Being left alone at the edge of the stream, Bernadette is preparing to remove her stockings. At this moment an extraordinary noise is heard. She is riveted to the spot; she trembles. May it not be a whirlwind? No, for on looking about her, she sees that everything is still; the poplars, which line the river bank are motionless. Then she tries again to take off her shoes and stockings, and for the second time, she experiences the action of a mysterious power upon her soul. Raising her head, she looks towards the Grotto, which is directly opposite. All of a sudden, what does she see? A dazzling light shining forth from an oval shaped hollow in the upper part of the Grotto; and in the midst of this light she sees standing erect a lady endowed with superhuman majesty and celestial beauty: it was the immaculate Virgin, who appeared to her for the first time, without however making herself known.

What were the features and what was the appearance under which she appeared? Later on, Bernadette described these with rare precision, and a skillful artist, under her direction, attempted their reproduction.

We can form an idea of the conception by means of the statues and engravings of Our Lady of Lourdes, which are now scattered throughout the world. But neither sculpture nor painting will ever succeed in rendering the supernatural light and the celestial beauty which shone forth in the immaculate Virgin. They are both infinitely beyond the grasp of our poor human ideals. We will treat of them in the following chapter.

In presence of the astonishing spectacle which unfolds itself before her gaze, Bernadette experiences the effects always produced by a vision, when it comes from God, especially when it is the first time that He grants such a favor. The soul is suddenly overpowered and overwhelmed; it is possessed by a holy fear. It feels a divine something it has never felt before, and whose weight is oppressive. *All strength abandons it, and it seems to be on the point of swooning away.* It is by means of this last expression that the prophet Daniel describes what had taken place in himself: *Et emarcui nec habui quicquam virium.* (1).

When once, however, this first surprise and this holy dread have passed away, the soul experiences interiorly a supernatural strength and calm which permit the contemplation of the divine object before it; and the beauty of this object acts upon it with such sweetness as to cause ecstasy.

Such are the effects produced upon the soul of Bernadette by the sight of the immaculate Virgin. Now let us listen to Bernadette herself. We quote from the

(1). Daniel x, 8.

recital of the first historian of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Reverend Mr. Fourcade. (1.)

"I fall upon my knees, and instinctively I clutch at my chaplet, in order to say it. I endeavor to lift the cross to my forehead, so as to bless myself, but my hand falls back, as if it were paralyzed. I try again, but with no better success. The Virgin, as though she would encourage me, takes the crucifix of the chaplet she is holding in her own hands and makes the sign of the cross. I immediately take courage, and make the sign of the cross myself and say my beads. As soon as I have completed my prayers, the apparition vanishes from my sight."

Coming to herself gradually, but still deeply moved, Bernadette fords the rivulet and says to her companions, who were waiting for her in the Grotto: "Have you not seen anything?" "No; but you, have you seen anything?" Bernadette merely answers evasively, and they set out on their way back to Lourdes. On the road however, her companions who had remarked something extraordinary in her countenance, urge her so strenuously to tell them if she has not seen some vision, that being unable to resist their importunities she relates what she has beheld.

Hardly have they reached the house, when the companions of Bernadette hasten to inform her mother of what had occurred. Louise Soubirons questions her daughter, who confirms their narrative. The astonish-

(1) Apparition at the Grotto of Lourdes—Account prepared by the Reverend Mr. Fourcade, with the approval of the Bishop of Tarbes, 1862.

ment of the poor woman is easily understood. Is it simply an illusion? May there be some truth at the bottom of the whole matter? At all events, she deems it the wisest course to forbid her daughter's return to the Grotto.

Bernadette had just been the recipient of a favor of the most exalted nature. It was the queen of heaven who had appeared to her, and who, on several successive days, was to renew the same prodigy in her behalf. In this first apparition she had confined herself in allowing Bernadette, whilst in a state of ecstacy, to enjoy the appearance of her divine beauty, and in pouring forth from her maternal heart into that of the child the most tender effusions of love. Her gaze had been for many moments turned upon the humble little girl, whom she had blessed, and upon whose forehead she had set the seal of eternal adoption; selecting her as her confident, her witness, and her embassadress.

The child treasured up in her heart every circumstance connected with the vision. And on that Shrove Tuesday night, when the world gives itself up to such insane pleasures, Bernadette recalling to mind all that she had seen, that celestial countenance, that smile, that ineffable goodness which had so charmed her, must have been in heaven, by anticipation.

The hope of seeing this lady again, for it was thus she styled her, in her simple conversation, inspires her with a still greater longing to return to the Grotto; and as the most Blessed Virgin herself was active in stimulating this desire, it became a passion with the child. For the next two days, she spoke not to her

companions and the other girls of her age, save of the happiness she would experience in returning with them to the Grotto of the Massabielle rocks. She was deterred by her mother's prohibition. But the cry of our fathers in the days of the crusades: "*God wills it*," was about to be echoed at Lourdes, and we shall see how all human prohibitions, and all human persuasions are as nought in presence of the divine will.

CHAPTER III.

On the nature and the effects of the light and of the beauty which flash forth in Jesus Christ, in the most Blessed Virgin, and in the Saints, on the occasion of apparitions.

As this light and this beauty are to manifest themselves in a sensible manner to Bernadette in all the apparitions of the immaculate Virgin, we have deemed it useful to explain here their nature and effects, so as to enable the reader to form in their regard, a correct opinion.

A great saint, Saint Theresa, will be our guide in this undertaking, who after having experienced the most exalted visions and being ravished to the highest heavens, received from God the favor of being able to describe the privileges she enjoyed: she expresses herself as follows: "It pleased our Lord, one day, whilst I was at prayer, to show me His hands only; their beauty was so exceedingly great that I cannot find language for its portrayal. I was seized with dread, as I always am, whenever He begins to grant me some supernatural favor. A few days later, I saw His divine countenance, and I remained in a state of complete ecstasy. At first I could not understand why the adorable Saviour, who was afterwards to appear to me wholly and without division, should thus

exhibit himself piecemeal, as it were; but I have since comprehended, that it was owing to the weakness of my nature. A creature as abject and unfaithful as myself could not have stood so much glory collectively. He knew this, and in His tender mercy, He was preparing me little by little: may He be forever blessed on this account!

"You will think perhaps that no great effort was required for the contemplation of hands and of a countenance whose beauty was extraordinary. If this be so, then you are still to learn that glorified bodies are so beautiful, the supernatural effulgence with which they shine is so exceedingly brilliant, that the soul no longer possesses itself. And this contemplation threw me into a condition of holy trembling; it troubled and moved me deeply; but soon the certainty of the truth of the vision, and the happy effects to which it gave birth in me, caused a feeling of the most entire confidence to take the place of fear.

"On the Feast of Saint Paul, during mass, Jesus Christ condescended to appear to me entirely clothed in His most holy humanity, endowed with ineffable beauty and majesty, just as He is portrayed after His resurrection,.....I will simply say, that even if in heaven there were only the great beauty of the glorified persons of the saints and especially that of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ to enrapture the sense of sight, the pleasure would be unutterable. If in this our exile, where our adorable Saviour only allows us such glimpses of the splendor of His majesty as our miseries can admit, and if the sight of Him throws us

into such raptures, what will it be in heaven, when our soul will behold Him in all His beauty and in all His glory?

"Our Lord was graciously pleased to appear to me so frequently in this glorified state, and gave me to appreciate with such certainty the truth of so great a favor, that in a short time, I found myself free of all fear of being deceived. I then recognized clearly, that even if I were to strive for many years to represent to myself a type of beauty so transcendent, I could never hope to succeed; for its immaculate whiteness alone, to say nothing of its brilliancy, surpasses anything that may be imagined here below. It is a brilliancy which does not dazzle, it is a whiteness combining ineffable purity with suavity, it is an infused splendor which gives untold pleasure to the eye, without causing the slightest trace of fatigue. It is an incandescence which enables the soul to see this inexpressibly divine beauty. It is a light infinitely different from that to which we are accustomed on earth, and alongside of its rays which flood the enraptured trance of the soul, the lustre of those of the sun pales to such a degree, that they no longer offer the slightest attraction.

"The same difference exists between these two lights as that which arises from the comparison of the waters of a very limpid stream flowing over a bed of crystal in which are reflected the rays of the sun, and those of a very turbid river coursing along the surface of the ground, and covered by a dense cloud. This divine light however, in no manner resembles that of the sun; it alone strikes the soul as being a natural light,

whereas that of the sun, by contrast, appears artificial. This light is like a day that knows no night; it is always shining, always luminous, and cannot be dimmed. In a word, it is such, that the most penetrating mind, even after the efforts of a long life, can never succeed in forming an idea of its character. God shows it so suddenly, that if it were necessary to see it, the eyelids open, time would be wanting for the execution of even this rapid motion. It matters not however, whether they be parted or closed. When our Lord wills it, this light shows itself despite ourselves, and neither distraction, nor resistance, nor art, nor care can prevent its reaching unto us.

"Sometimes this adorable master manifests Himself to me with such imposing majesty, that doubt as to the reality of its being Himself is impossible. This happens most frequently after communion. He makes the soul so irresistibly conscious of His power, that it is, as it were, annihilated, and feels itself wholly consumed in God. O my Jesus! who can depict that splendor of glory with which you stand revealed at such moments!

"As to myself, I am convinced, that when it pleases our Lord to disclose to us a great part of His majesty and glory, such vision acts with so much force, that no soul could withstand its influence, did not God fortify it by an exceedingly supernatural assistance, by causing it to be plunged into rapture and ecstasy, because then the vision becomes lost in the enjoyment which it creates. Later, it is true, one forgets the over-powering features of that excess of glory; but

the majesty and the beauty of our Lord remain so deeply impressed upon the soul, that their memories cannot be eradicated. (1)"

In the foregoing pages which are a doctrinal masterpiece, Saint Theresa acquaints us with the nature and the effects of the light and of the beauty which are resplendent in the persons of Jesus Christ, His mother, and the saints, when they appear to a soul upon earth. She affirms that this light and this beauty are supernatural, and it thus is not in the power of man, who judges only by instituting a comparison with the natural light in his possession, to conceive and, still less, to express in language what they are. "The beauty and the whiteness of one of the hands of Jesus Christ, says she, infinitely surpass anything we could imagine."

Thus that light and that beauty being essentially beyond the ideal knowledge of man, neither painter, nor genius, nor artist, can have any conception of them; consequently their faintest representation is impossible. And even were it granted to the most sublime genius whilst in a state of ecstasy to contemplate the light and the beauty of Jesus Christ, or of the immaculate Virgin, he would, nevertheless, be forever powerless to cause them to live again upon canvass or in marble. Why? Because for the reproduction of a light and of a beauty belonging to the supernatural and divine order, he could only dispose of elements appertaining to natural and human art. Thus, however magnificent the production, for which we

(1) Life of Saint Theresa, written by herself, chap. xxviii.

might be indebted to him, there would always lie, between his workmanship and the subject whose representation was essayed, the entire distance which seperates the human from the supernatural and divine idea.

After having explained so lucidly the nature of the light and of the beauty which shine forth in Jesus Christ and his holy mother during apparitions, Saint Theresa, with the authority of her own personal experience, teaches us the effects which this light and this beauty produce upon the soul; they frighten it at first, then they throw it into ecstasy, and they become so deeply imprinted upon it that their memory is forever enduring. Besides, as the saint says, in several passages of her writings, such apparitions always leave the soul enriched with very great spiritual graces.

We can understand now how Bernadette, after the alarm caused by the first apparition had subsided, finding herself in the presence of the immaculate Virgin was suddenly wrapt into ecstasy, and how her transfigured countenance became as lovely as that of an angel.

We know too, that the image of the spotless Virgin was so profoundly graven in the soul of Bernadette, that she could not forget its lines. Thus it is not at all astonishing, if later, on beholding the statue of the Virgin which the artist in Lyons had executed according to her most minute directions, these words escaped from her soul: "Ah! how beautiful! But....it is not she. The difference is as great as that between heaven and earth!"

The reader must not think however that the supernatural light and beauty, which the soul beholds in this world whilst in the ecstasy of a vision or of an apparition, are the supernatural light and beauty which the saints contemplate in heaven. Between these two orders of light and beauty there exists a fathomless abyss: the one is merely the reflection and the feeble radiation of the other.

In heaven, the light and the beauty which the saints contemplate are God Himself, God, the uncreated infinite light, the source of all light; God, the infinite beauty, the eternal type and the everlasting source of all beauty.

In visions and apparitions of our Lord, of the most Blessed Virgin and of the saints, God, who is invisible by nature, remains invisible. The infinite light and beauty which constitute His essence are not to be exhibited. In a word, the soul does not see the divinity.

There exists then between the light and the beauty which are divulged here below to the insight of the soul in visions and apparitions, and the light and the beauty which burst upon the saints in heaven, all the difference between a reflected view of God, and God Himself seen face to face.

In heaven, God will be in the centre of the soul; from that centre, He will, in His divine light and beauty irradiate first, over the powers of the soul, which He will transform into His own light and beauty; and from the centre of the thus transformed soul, He will also irradiate over the glorified body, so that the light and the beauty of this body shall be the light itself and the beauty of God.

God, who will dwell within us, will give to our intellectual perception the power of His own eye, that is to say a share in the light of His word, so that we may be able to bear the view of the infinite light and beauty.

In heaven, the miracle of miracles of light and of beauty will be the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ; and next, the body of the immaculate Virgin. The sight of them alone will suffice to keep heaven in a state of everlasting ecstasy.

Christ, the incarnate word, God of God, light of light, having within Himself the fountain head of this infinite light and beauty, will cause them to flow from His bosom in never ceasing torrents over the whole of creation, over pure spirits, primarily over the soul, and secondarily over the suns and the worlds scattered throughout space, unto the utmost limits of that space itself, so that, during eternity, we will behold that light and that beauty penetrating and surrounding with their rays all the works of the Creator, and the entire measureless extent of His dominions.

Here below, this feeble ray or this reflection of the infinite light and beauty of God suffices to throw the soul into ecstasy, to remove it from itself, and to make it experience an enjoyment more elevated and more penetrating than all the joys of this world put together.

In heaven, the infinite light, the infinite beauty, God Himself will be revealed to the soul, will be united to the soul, will penetrate and transform it into Himself.

Is it possible to imagine what the soul will experience, how exquisite will be its perceptions while under

the spell of this infinite light and of this infinite beauty, contemplated in their essence, and not merely contemplated, but possessed through a sovereign union, along with the consciousness that this union is to endure forever?

Abysses, whose yawning chasms no line can fathom, separate the delights of terrestrial ecstasy, that spark as evanescent as the lightning which rends the cloud, from the felicity of that other and imperishable ecstasy which is reserved for heaven!

This ecstasy is so exalted, its transforming powers are so intense, it is so deifying, that even were a man to live as long as the world may last, immolating himself, for the sake of God at every moment, the very first instant of enjoyment of that celestial estate, would be a reward, worthy of being extended by God, for all his exertions. And to think that this ecstasy will be eternal!

Our destiny, therefore, is one of visions and ecstasies transcending far those of Bernadette, of Lourdes, and all those granted to the saints here on earth.

Thus, O Mary, we will one day see thee in heaven, countless millions of times more resplendent and more beautiful than ever did Bernadette and all the saints who lived on earth! In their ecstasies, they saw in thee, only a reflection of the light and of the beauty of God. But they did not behold God in thee; in their most sublime raptures, they only saw the dazzling shadow of God.

In heaven, we will see, at the centre of thy soul, the Holy Trinity, God; light uncreated, infinite; beauty

infinite, penetrating thee and transforming thee into itself; and making for thee, out of the sun of the divinity, a mantle of infinite splendor, beneath whose folds thou shalt shelter forever the new heavens and the new worlds which He will create for His elect; and this sight of God in thee, of the infinite light and the infinite beauty of God in thee, will throw us into an ecstasy, in comparison with which all the ecstasies of the saints in this world are but as a drop of water to the ocean! And this ecstasy is to be as lasting as God Himself! O Mary, mother of God and our mother, obtain for us, through thy all powerful supplications, that we may, one day, share with thee and with all the saints the delights of this ineffable and eternal ecstasy!

CHAPTER IV.

February 14th, 1858—Sunday—Second Apparition.

The ardent desire felt by Bernadette to return to the Grotto among the rocks of Massabielle, had its origin from above as we have already remarked.

There, in this sanctuary of the Pyrenees, the Saviour of the world wished to establish a throne of clemency for His most holy mother, which should last for ages, and to which she should summon sinners from all parts of the world, tempering divine justice in their behalf and making them return to the narrow path which leads to heaven. Such was the merciful design which the heart of Jesus Christ had conceived, and which He contemplated carrying into execution by means only of the instrumentality of a little girl.

On the 14th of February, a Sunday, after high mass, at about eleven o'clock, Bernadette is interiorly conscious of the presence of that supernatural thrill which attracts her to the Grotto. The immaculate Virgin is indeed to appear to her for the second time. The spirit of God acts simultaneously upon the other little girls who have listened to Bernadette; they have not forgotten what she told them in regard to the beauty of the lady. About twenty of them therefore come along at this time, and beg her to take them with her to the Grotto. Bernadette declares, that first of all, she must

obtain her mother's permission. Then she inquires if they all have their beads. Two of the number who are unprovided with rosaries, quickly start off to supply the deficiency.

Here again, we quote from the narration of the first historian of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Reverend Mr. Fourcade:

"Bernadette's sister and her companions are deeply struck by the secret with which they have been entrusted. Sunday, after high mass, along with other children of their age, they come to Bernadette supplicating her consent to take them back to the Grotto. The young girl herself wanted to return to that spot much more than any of the rest, but her mother's prohibition having been so formal, she protests that she cannot disobey. A refusal of this kind does not disconcert the children however. They go after Bernadette's mother and beg her to withdraw the prohibition given her daughter. At first the mother refuses, alleging that owing to the proximity of the Gave to the Grotto, some accident might happen to them; and that as the hour for vespers will soon be at hand, they may run the risk of not being back in time. Finally she yields and grants the desired permission, the children making the most solemn promises that they will be careful, and be sure to return for vespers.

"They set out—Bernadette however is not without misgivings: she has sometimes heard of apparitions of evil spirits; but it was immediately added that it is often possible to drive them away with holy water. She takes a phial at her parents' house, and invites

her companions to follow her to church; there she and they pray for a few moments; she fills her bottle with holy water, and then they start in a body for the Grotto."

They agree among themselves that Bernadette is to throw holy water at the lady when she appears, saying to her: "If you come from God, advance; if you come from the devil, withdraw."

Here we will remark that Bernadette in speaking to the Virgin makes use only of the dialect of the Pyrenees, and that the Virgin always replied in the same dialect.

Having reached the Grotto, the little maidens kneel, and following Bernadette's example, they begin to say the beads in silence. What is it that now takes place? Bernadette will tell us in her artless language and with childlike simplicity.

"After a little while, the niche in the Grotto becomes illuminated, and the apparition shows itself to me, as it did the first time, I said to my companions,

"——See, there she is!

"Whilst I was as it were enraptured in presence of this heavenly beauty, one of my friends slipped the bottle of holy water into my hand, when, remembering our agreement, I got up, and shaking the bottle briskly, I throw holy water on the lady who was before me, inside of the niche, and I told her:

"If you come from God, draw nearer.

"She replied with a gracious smile; turning towards me and advancing to the very edge of the rock.

"I repeated: 'If you come from God, draw nearer,'

and I remarked that at this name of God, her countenance was lighted up with still greater brilliancy.

"At the sight of so much beauty, so much majesty, at the sight of that motherly smile which attracted me, I could not make up my mind to tell her: 'If you come at the instigation of the devil, withdraw.'

"I felt that I saw before me an inhabitant of heaven; I therefore knelt down again, and I continued the recitation of my rosary. She seemed to be listening, for holding her own chaplet she caused the beads to pass through her fingers, but without saying any words. I had hardly ended my prayer, when the apparition vanished."

"The companions of Bernadette," Mr. Fourcade continues, "saw indeed the motions she made whilst throwing holy water towards the niche in the Grotto; they also noticed how her countenance was transformed whilst she was praying; but it was impossible for them to perceive, even in the slightest manner, the mysterious object which thus absorbed all the being of the happy young girl. All was at an end for that day. They returned to town in time for vespers."

Scarcely had they left church, when Marie, Bernadette's sister, and some of her companions relate first to Francis and to Louise Soubirous what had occurred at the Grotto. Bernadette too affirms that she has seen the same lady again. Then they go home to their families. The text of the Holy Writ, "God extracts praise from the mouths of children" is verified; thanks to their tale, by night, the rumor of the apparitions has spread all over the place, and it soon reaches beyond Lourdes.

But as it was said, that Bernadette during these two first apparitions was reciting her chaplet, and as the child affirmed that the being which appeared to her was a lady of heavenly beauty, who also held a chaplet in her own hands, people were much struck by this two-fold circumstance.

And as on the other hand, God willed that the truth should be known, He began to throw a ray of light upon the subject. It was freely asked with a tendency to an affirmative reply, whether this inhabitant of the skies, who appears to the child, might not be the most Blessed Virgin?

CHAPTER V.

February 18th, 1858—third apparition. The immaculate Virgin asks Bernadette to come to the Grotto for fifteen consecutive days, and she agrees to do so: memorable promise then made to Bernadette by the most Blessed Virgin.

On the morning of Thursday, February 18th, the immaculate Virgin was to appear to Bernadette for the third time. It was an important market day at Lourdes; and owing to this circumstance, the tidings of the miraculous vision would be diffused, on that very evening, throughout the department and the neighboring localities.

Before sunrise, at about six o'clock, after having assisted at the half past five o'clock mass, Bernadette sets out for the Grotto. This time, her companions are no longer children; she is escorted by a lady of the city and a sodalist of the most Blessed Virgin, both of mature age. As they had thought that the apparition might perhaps be one of the suffering souls of purgatory, they wish to assure themselves in this regard. With this object in view, they bring with them a pen, some ink, and paper, which they ask Bernadette to present to the lady, requesting her to write her name and to state what she wishes.

On the two first occasions, the road to the Grotto had been very easily gone over, as the streamlet, to which allusion has already been made, could be crossed

with dry feet. Since then, however, the waters having returned to their channel, access to the Grotto in the manner described was no longer practicable. Bernadette and her two new companions are therefore compelled to scale the rocks of Massabielle, and go down the abrupt descent which leads to the Grotto. Bernadette who felt that the mysterious power was again urging her on, advanced with rapid and firm strides, and leaves her companions in the rear. They cannot keep up with her, and toil slowly down the steep path.

When they reach the spot, they find Bernadette on her knees, her gaze directed towards the place where she had beheld the apparition, her countenance being rather that of an angel than of a human being.

Now let us listen to Bernadette's recital:

"Having reached the Grotto before my companions, I knelt down and bowed reverently before the niche where the lady had appeared to me. After a few moments spent in prayer, I see the niche beginning to be illuminated, and immediately afterwards, the lady appears to me for the third time. She is standing on the edge of the rock, and presents the same celestial beauty and the same splendor, as at the previous apparitions. She smiled upon me, and with her hand made me a sign to draw near.

"Whilst I am preparing to obey, my companions reach the Grotto; they immediately fall on their knees, and I tell them:—'She is there; she makes me a sign to draw near.' They say to me:—Ask her if we can remain. I ask the question, and, on receiving an affirmative answer, I reply:—Yes, you can stay.

"They kneel down alongside of me, and they light a taper they had with them, and which belonged to the sodalist.

"Whilst, my soul being wholly ravished, I was contemplating the inexpressible beauty standing before me, my companions say to me:—Since she calls you and beckons to you, go nearer to her—ask her to write upon this piece of paper who she is, and why she comes here. If she be a soul suffering in purgatory and begging for either prayers or masses, we are ready to do anything she may require in order to be at rest.

"Taking the paper, together with the inkstand and the pen, which they had placed in my hand, I advance towards the lady, who encourages me by her looks. But at each forward step I make, she withdraws into the recess of the niche. I lose sight of her for a moment, but she soon re-appears. Then standing on tiptoe, in order to reach her, I offer her the pen and ink and paper. My companions come forward also, but on a motion made by the lady, I make them a sign not to advance, and they kneel down, a little to one side.

"I then deliver my message:

"Lady, if you have anything to communicate to me, will you please have the kindness to write who you are, and what you want?

"She smiled at my request, and pronounced the following words:

"It is not necessary that I write what I have to tell you. Then she adds:—Will you do me the favor to come here for fifteen days?

"I reply:

"I promise you that I will.

"Then, showing her satisfaction, and smiling upon me again, she responds to my promise in these terms:

"AND I PROMISE TO MAKE YOU HAPPY, NOT IN THIS WORLD, BUT IN THE NEXT.

"Then, without losing sight of her who had just addressed me in such terms, I turn towards my companions, and I tell them what she asked me, and what I answered.

And as I observed that, whilst following me with her eyes, she was also gazing benevolently upon the sodalist, I said to her:

"She is looking at you now.

"Then my companions say to me:

"Ask her, if she would be displeased at our accompanying you to this place every day during the next fortnight?

"I presented their request, and she replied:

"They, and others too, may return with you: I desire to see people here.

"After these words, she disappeared," and Bernadette and her companions return to Lourdes.

This third apparition presents a new feature. In the two first, the most Blessed Virgin merely showed herself to Bernadette, this vision being of itself sufficient to throw her into ecstasy and to win her heart. Now, on the contrary, she begins to unfold her plan. "Will you," says she to the child, "do me the favor to come here for fifteen days? Not only your companions can come with you, but other persons also; my desire is to see people here."

As it is the queen of heaven who speaks in this manner, her language, related by Bernadette and her companions, created an astonishing impression. The subject of this day's apparition flies from mouth to mouth; the strangers who had come to Lourdes on account of its being market day, and the inhabitants of the city were deeply moved. They said to one another: "So then, the prodigy is to be repeated during fifteen days! Not only can we be witnesses to the apparition, inasmuch as we will see Bernadette in ecstasy, but we are also invited to be present, since she who appears has said: 'My wish is to see people here!'"

The child says that nothing can give an idea of her beauty, that she is beautiful, incomparably beautiful! and she says the beads before the lady, who holds a chaplet suspended from her arm. May it not be the most Holy Virgin!

As a reward to Bernadette for having promised to come during fifteen days, she told her: "And I promise that I will make you happy, not in this world, but in the next.' Who but the custodian of the treasures of heaven, she who dispenses every grace, the all powerful mother of God, could make, or could keep such a promise?

On that very same evening the relation of these apparitions, and the announcement that other apparitions were still to occur, had spread throughout the department and the surrounding country.

CHAPTER VI.

February 19th, 1858, Friday, fourth apparition.— February 20th, Saturday, fifth apparition.— Francis Soubirous and Louise Casterot behold their daughter transfigured, and believe in the truth of the miracle.

What the most Blessed Virgin said to Bernadette at the apparition of February 18th:

"I DESIRE TO SEE PEOPLE HERE!"

is about to meet with its realization. As the impulse given to the multitude comes from God, nothing can stop its advance. First will come the dwellers among the Pyrenees, then the neighboring population, and later those from greater distances.

On the 19th of February, more than a hundred persons are at the Grotto, when the sun rises. It is at this hour, that Bernadette comes, after having heard the first mass at the parish church.

On the 20th of February, at the same hour, the number has increased to four or five hundred. On the 21st February, Sunday, the throng is to be reckoned by thousands, and the figures will continue to become larger and larger.

On the 4th of March, the last day of the fifteen, more than twenty thousand persons will have come together.

On the 4th April, 1864, from fifty to sixty thousand pilgrims will be present, when the Bishop of Tarbes

takes possession of the Grotto, and blesses the statue of the immaculate Virgin.

In 1874, in the course of seven months, nearly one hundred thousand pilgrims forming one hundred and twenty-seven different pilgrimages will come to Lourdes.

Finally, in July 1876, when Pius IX, through his delegate, will crown Our Lady of Lourdes, more than one hundred thousand catholics will assist at this triumph of the immaculate Virgin.

Let us return however to the 19th of February, 1858. Early in the morning, Bernadette feels the gentle impulse of the Holy Ghost urging her on to the rocks of Massabielle. She sets out with her mother and a few companions, and the escort increases as it goes along. Over a hundred persons, as we have just said, are grouped in the interior of the Grotto and along its approaches.

The humble child reaches the spot, with her customary candid and confident looks. She kneels in the same place as she did on former occasions, opposite the oval opening hollowed out in the upper part of the rock. As usual, she holds her chaplet in her hands. The immaculate Virgin does not keep her waiting long. All of a sudden, Bernadette's appearance ceases to be natural; she is transfigured; her attitude is that of an angel. Her forehead reflects a visibly supernatural light; her eyes are riveted upon her whose beauty ravishes her soul: she is contemplating, unawares, the immaculate Virgin, the most holy mother of God. Penetrated by pious feeling, the by-standers fall upon their knees, clasp their hands and pray. It is not

possible for them to doubt that Bernadette has a heavenly vision, and the thought which is uppermost in their minds is that she is seeing the most Blessed Virgin.

Nearly an hour is thus spent, and Bernadette becomes herself once more.

The next day, Saturday, February 20th, at the same hour, nearly five hundred persons are assembled at the Grotto. Bernadette arrives. This time, her father and mother are among the number of those forming her escort.

Scarcely has she knelt down, holding in one hand a taper, and in the other her chaplet, and begun to pray, before she assumes the attitude of ecstasy. The persons present, who are also kneeling, unite their prayers with hers. And as on the occasion of this apparition, as well as of the preceding ones, they see Bernadette reciting her chaplet with angelic fervor, they also, agreeing with the testimony of those who were witnesses of the event on the day previous, think that it must be the most Blessed Virgin who appears to the child.

When the vision is over and Bernadette returns towards Lourdes, all those who have been witnesses of the prodigy salute her respectfully, and a good many accompany her home. Her father and mother having seen with their own eyes the angelic beauty of her countenance during the ecstasy, believe in the truth of the apparition. By means of this favor, God is preparing them for the persecution they will have to undergo on account of their daughter.

Before proceeding with this recital, we deem it useful

to acquaint the reader with certain details relating to the apparitions of the most Blessed Virgin to Bernadette. We take them from the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes.*

"The Virgin appeared standing, her feet resting upon a sweet briar bush. She would salute the child with her head, and with her extended arms, then she would bow again; finally taking the cross of a pendent rosary she would make the sign of the cross upon herself with ineffable nobility and piety, when folding her hands, she would let the white beads slide, one by one, through her fingers. Never, so long as she was saying the rosary, did her lips move.

"In Bernadette's hands, the chaplet sometimes passed rapidly through her fingers, and then again slowly; it would often hang motionless; she was reciting Hail Marys, and yet, strange to relate, the attentive spectators who were eagerly on the watch for the slightest motions of her countenance, noticed that her lips seldom ever quivered. Those who were nearest to her could hear, as though coming from far down her throat tiny silvery sounds which were barely perceptible.

"At certain moments, she would appear to be more intently attached to the vision, as though she were listening. On several occasions she was obliged to address the benignant lady. No one among the bystanders could even suspect this to be the case. One day, showing much surprise, she said to a person: "What! you did not hear me? Why I spoke so loudly!" Neither sound nor motion had been produced by her mouth. From time to time she would make the sign

of the cross over again in the touching and beautiful manner which has been described.

"The Virgin's eyes were nearly always riveted upon those of Bernadette; every now and then she would raise them in order to scatter broadcast over the assembly glances and smiles beaming with maternal tenderness. The little girl used to say, that she appeared to derive great pleasure at seeing these pious people brought together merely by the suspicion of her being present.

"The child was entirely absorbed: all her faculties were transferred to the vision; nothing of what was taking place around her could even for an instant turn aside her looks or distract her attention. And this supernatural state, during whose continuance she was no longer herself, would last at least an hour.

"Her mother almost always accompanied her, and two of her aunts, Mary Bernard Casterot, her godmother, and Lucy Casterot, were also both in the habit of following her to the Grotto.

"On the road she took her aunt Lucy's arm, so as to fatigue less her chest, because she generally had an attack of asthma in the morning; but on nearing the Grotto she was in the habit of descending the declivity unaided and with surprising agility.

After the fourth apparition, Bernadette every morning, on reaching the place, would light a blessed taper, and would hold it in her left hand as long as the Virgin was visible.

"At first a lady who lived at Lourdes lent her the taper: but later, her aunts, each one in turn, presented

her with the tapers which they used at the meetings of their sodality.

One day, towards the close of her ecstasy, Bernadette arose, and leaning towards her youngest aunt, Lucy, asked her:

"'Will you give me your taper, and allow me to leave it in the Grotto?'

"'Certainly, I will give it to you; go and leave it there, if you choose.' The child directed her steps towards the rear of the Grotto. She planted the lower extremity of the taper in the ground, by pressing it against the rock, and left it burning; then she came back and resumed her usual station.

"After the apparition, and whilst retracing their steps homeward, her aunt questioned her, saying: 'Why did you request me to give you my taper, and why did you carry it inside the Grotto?' 'Because the vision asked me, if I would leave it burning, when I went away, and as it belonged to you, I could not do so, without having first obtained your consent.'

"Different persons had already deposited tapers at this spot. The mother of God wished to make it known that she would be pleased to accept the touching homage of thousands of lights which, at the present time, in her honor, unceasingly illumine the rock of the apparition."

CHAPTER VII.

February 21st, 1858—First Sunday of Lent—Sixth Apparition and fourth day of the fifteen. The most Blessed Virgin recommends praying for sinners.

Bernadette had already seen the immaculate Virgin five times, and on the occasion of the third apparition, after having promised to return to the Grotto for fifteen consecutive days, she had heard from her lips these words, which remained indelibly impressed upon her memory:

"AND I PROMISE YOU, THAT I WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY, NOT IN THIS WORLD, BUT IN THE NEXT."

Each time that she had found herself in the presence of the queen of heaven, she had experienced in her inmost soul a happiness not of this world. Thus all her energies were bent upon returning to the Grotto. To this desire was now added the binding effect of the promise she had made. And when at length the call from above was experienced, a gentle but at the same time irresistible impulse moved her, as the breeze wafts away a delicate leaf. Her fidelity in keeping her plighted word is therefore not difficult of comprehension.

The report of the apparitions had spread rapidly and had produced the deepest impression upon the catholic population of the Pyrenees.

It was no human cause which stirred them up, but

the breath of the Holy Spirit. Every one wishes to witness the prodigy, and on the 21st of February, the first Sunday of Lent, thousands of people from the surrounding country, mingling with the inhabitants of Lourdes, have gathered around the Grotto, before sunrise. The weather was calm and the heavens serene.

At sunrise, Bernadette appears on the road leading to the Grotto. The immense multitude open ranks to allow her free passage. She advances modestly and firmly, clad in the humble garments worn by the peasantry; she is delicate and small in stature, but an angelic something is noticeable in her entire person. She is looked upon by all with the most scrupulous respect.

As soon as she has reached a spot opposite the rustic niche hollowed out of the rock where the immaculate Virgin has appeared to her, she kneels down, holding in one hand a lighted taper, and in the other her chaplet. At the same instant, following her example, the innumerable witnesses of the scene bend their knees, as though they were in a sanctuary. She has hardly begun her prayer, before she becomes transfigured and wrapt in ecstasy: the immaculate Virgin stands before her.

"The apparition! the apparition!" is the warning signal instantaneously transmitted to the assembled multitude. Many add: "The most Blessed Virgin!" And a thrill runs through this vast gathering; all bow down reverently and remain in the attitude of prayer; they await with holy eagerness the revelations which Bernadette may make, when she will have come out of ecstasy.

What is it that occurs during this mysterious interview between the immaculate Virgin and her angelic confidant? To Bernadette alone is it given to repeat to us the precious details.

"She had hardly shown herself to me, when the sight of her caused me to experience, as on other occasions, a foretaste of heaven. Already, for several minutes, I had contemplated her beauty and glory, when her celestial countenance became over-shadowed with grief. Her looks then seemed to over-spread the entire earth, and she afterwards again directed her sorrowful glances towards me. Touched by the deep anguish depicted upon her features, I said to her: 'What is the matter with you? What is to be done?' She replied. 'PRAY FOR SINNERS.'

"I shared in her grief, and in order to act in conformity with her commands, I began to pray interiorly for sinners.

"At last, as though she had remarked the effect of the prayers offered up in the church, and had seen sinners, moved by repentance, becoming reconciled with God, she appeared to me to be in a condition of divine serenity, and the happiness of heaven was again manifest upon her countenance. She thus caused a ray of joy to cheer my soul. I completed the recitation of my chaplet, and she disappeared."

When she had ceased contemplating the queen of heaven, Bernadette began to return to her ordinary state, but the impression made by the ecstasy was only dispelled gradually.

Those who were sufficiently near to see her whilst

she was in ecstasy, then repeated aloud what they had seen: that her countenance was that of an angel. And these words are soon re-echoed among all the groups forming this immense assembly.

For all these people, Bernadette became as a sacred object. Before she could start back towards Lourdes, they crowded around her, they questioned her; they wished to know what she has seen, what she has heard. She tells them all. The words: "What is to be done? ——PRAY FOR SINNERS!" produce an astounding impression. They act the part of a flood of light and grace towards all who have just assisted at the prodigy.

Then Bernadette returns home, in order to prepare for church.

From that moment, till it is time for high mass, and from the close of the holy sacrifice until vespers, the emotion goes on gathering strength, and the only matter of any interest at Lourdes is the consideration of the events which have just occurred at the Grotto of the Massabielle rocks.

CHAPTER VIII.

On that very day, the 21st of February, the persecution against Bernadette breaks out.—Her invincible constancy.—God reveals that it is He Himself who founds the pilgrimage of Lourdes.

On that day, he, who of old took the shape of a serpent, is about to endeavor to raise his head in order to nip in the bud that which is in preparation against him at the Grotto of the Massabielle rocks. He enters upon a war to the death. But, what can he effect in opposition to her, whose heel has crushed his head for all eternity? The tempest which is brewing will end by bringing about, in a three-fold manner, his confusion and the triumph of the cause of God.

And in the first place, Bernadette will enjoy the happiness announced in the following terms in the gospel: "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice's sake!"

In the second place, this persecution, by its violence and duration, will prevent the heart of Bernadette from being elated by pride. The higher and more privileged the mission which God confides to her, the greater does He wish the lustre of its fulfillment to be, through her humility. And what better means could be devised to make Bernadette entertain the lowliest opinion of herself, than the reputation of being insane and the victim of an hallucination which her enemies

are endeavoring to forge for her? The persecution lasts from the 21st of February to the 4th of October. Bernadette, far from admitting to her soul the slightest emotion of pride, thinks only of humbling herself before God, of invoking Him, and of imploring the help of the immaculate Virgin. In this manner does she become more and more deeply grounded in christian humility.

At length, the cause of God requires no defender other than its ownself; the pilgrimage is established. God shows that it is His work alone, since He employs no assistance save that of a child who has no one in the world to sustain her, because, as we shall see, the bishop and the clergy take no part in the matter, but await developments in an attitude of impartial neutrality.

Here is a concise relation of this persecution: On the 21st of February, a Sunday, as Bernadette was coming out of church from vespers, a man, making his way through the crowd which was respectfully gathered around her, touched her upon the shoulder, saying: "In the name of the law, I arrest you, follow me." But where? "Before the commissary of police."

Bernadette presently appears before this functionary. Her peace is that of angel. The commissary subjects her to a long examination. Every artifice is employed to make her contradict herself, so that she may be convicted of falsehood. Vain hope! Bernadette disentangles every thread of the web which has been spun around her; she maintains with assurance that which she has affirmed: "I have said this and not that."

Threatened with being cast into prison, she replies more calmly than ever: "You may order me to be taken to prison by the police, but what I have said is the truth."

On the 26th of February, Bernadette was summoned to court. It was the day following that upon which the miraculous fountain had gushed forth; and ever since the morning of that day there were rumors of extraordinary cures. The clergy had been ordered by the bishop not to take part in the question, and they obeyed their instructions faithfully. Owing to this abstention of the clergy, the law tribunal found itself the only body having competency in the matter: it was its right and its duty to intervene; it was under the obligation of deciding whether Bernadette was an imposter, or whether she was herself deceived. No means of discovering the truth was neglected. The examination was protracted. The child answered the questions put to her so lucidly and so calmly that every one was astonished. Her veracity was above suspicion, and popular feeling became strongly in favor of the reality of the apparitions.

This justice must be rendered the president, the judges, the prosecuting officer of the government and his substitute, namely, that not finding any cause in Bernadette, they respected her freedom. In this manner, according to her promise to the lady, she was able to repair to the Grotto during the fifteen days; as well as on the 25th of March and the 5th of April: these two last apparitions being in compensation for the two days, in the fifteen, upon which the Virgin did not

appear. Thus, Bernadette was perfectly free to fulfill the mission with which she had been entrusted.

The concourse of people at the Grotto continues to become greater and greater. Now it is the turn of the Prefect of the Department to intervene. He views the whole matter in the light of a question involving public order: here is the erection of an oratory which has the authorization neither of the bishop nor of the minister of public worship. May there be no danger of superstition? As the bishop remains neutral, he deems it incumbent upon himself to do something. The Prefect was an honorable man, a catholic who professed his religious belief openly and fearlessly, and whose relations with the bishop were of the most cordial nature. This testimony has always been adduced in his favor by the most respectable members of the clergy of Tarbes.

But in the month of April, in view of the light thrown upon the subject, after the cross-questioning to which Bernadette had been subjected, after the cures reputed to be miraculous, in presence of the example given by the bishop who was investigating, and therefore not hasty in pronouncing, the Prefect ought at least to have hesitated. This is what he did not do however; and without any serious examination, without proof, without any thing in support of his view, he declared that the whole thing was merely a superstitious movement, which must be promptly and summarily suppressed. Now, if the apparitions were real, which, to say the least, might be numbered among the possibilities, what did such conduct on the part of the

Prefect amount to, if not to an open declaration of war against God? Without allowing this hypothesis, which was the expression of the truth however, to stay his action for a moment, he decided upon viewing the question in an erroneous light, and in so doing, the Prefect of Tarbes erred gravely. Once embarked upon this deceiving course, he made rapid progress, using all the energy of a good man who honestly believes he is defending the interests of religion and of the State. He therefore undertakes to stamp out and destroy every vestige of this pilgrimage. The recent events at Lourdes being, in his opinion, merely a superstition, Bernadette must either be an imposter or a deluded child. Her veracity having emerged unscathed from the various examinations to which she had been subjected, it followed that she must be the victim of an illusion. If it can be established that Bernadette is suffering from some brain disease, or that she is weak-minded, the pilgrimage will be ruined from the very start, and all trouble will be at an end.

A commission of two physicians is therefore dispatched to the home of the Soubirous family. In their report, they declare that the faculties of the child are very sound, that the condition of her brain is normal; but as she persists in her affirmations, they add that she may perhaps be the victim of some hallucination. Taking advantage of this word *perhaps*, the project is formed of having Bernadette transferred to Tarbes, where she may be placed in a hospital for treatment, and where her hallucination may be recognized. But the carrying out of this measure meets

with insuperable obstacles. An invisible shield was sheltering the humble girl; it was the protection of the queen of heaven.

Unable to effect anything against Bernadette, the Prefect turned his attention to the sanctuary where the apparitions had occurred. He orders the commissary of police to remove from the Grotto all the objects which had been placed there, and to bring them to the mayoralty. This order is carried out on the 4th of May, in the evening: money, offerings, *ex-votos*, tapers, bouquets of flowers, everything is removed. But as it was the month of Mary, offerings, gifts, tapers and flowers soon begin to accumulate again in the Grotto. The commissary of police removes every thing for the second time.

Extraordinary cures, however, are multiplying daily; they can no longer be denied. What is to be done? With inexorable logic, if the hypothesis of the truth of the apparitions be set aside, these cures can only be attributed to some natural agency, which must be sought for and discovered.

A chemist is charged with the duty of analyzing the water of the Grotto. Either through profound ignorance, or unalloyed bad faith, he declares that its water possesses therapeutic or healing properties which entitle it to be placed in the front rank among the mineral springs of the Pyrenees. On the 6th of May this analysis was in the hands of the Prefect. Those who opposed the Grotto were triumphant, and unbelievers also; their triumph however was destined to be short lived. The despoiling of the Grotto, far from lessen-

ing the concourse of pilgrims had, on the contrary, only acted to stimulate its increase.

The Prefect then imagined that the best means of putting an end to the superstition would be to forbid access to the Grotto. In consequence, the mayor of Lourdes is ordered to publish the following ordinance:

"1st. It is forbidden to draw water at the fountain of the Grotto. 2nd. Circulation is likewise forbidden through the corporation property of Massabielle. 3d. A barrier will be set up at the entrance of the Grotto, so as to close it to the public; posts will also be set down on which will be placed the notice: *It is forbidden to enter this property.* Any and all contraventions of the present ordinance will be prosecuted according to law. Done at the mayoralty of Lourdes, on the 8th of June, 1858. Signed and approved by the Prefect."

Notwithstanding the ordinance and the barrier, the impulse continues. Being unable to reach the Massabielle rocks, the pilgrims follow the right bank of the Gave, whence they can see the Grotto, and from this point they transmit their homages to the immaculate Virgin.

On the 28th of July, 1858, the Bishop of Tarbes publishes a decree establishing a commission of inquiry concerning the apparitions of Lourdes. By this action, the Prelate brought the matter before his own tribunal, and the Prefect should have abstained from further interference in a subject so essentially religious; had he done so he might have effected an honorable retreat. But he did not adopt this policy: to his mind the question was still one of public order, and he allowed this

view to prevail. Fortified and encouraged by the support he received at the hands of the minister of public worship, he determined to follow the path of vexatious administrative intervention.

The episcopal decree was no sooner published, than it served as a pretext for a hostile press to sound the signal of universal war. All the anti-catholic papers of France and of foreign countries attacked both the events which had occurred at the Grotto, and the action of the bishop. The spirit of impiety hoped by a collective assault to rid the world of this annoying issue; but its anticipations were doomed to disappointment, as the catholic press succeeded in refuting the sophistry and blasphemy made use of by this legion of impious and infidel adversaries. The war waged by them results only in setting belief in the truth of the apparitions upon unassailable ground.

. Science too has a share in bringing about their discomfiture. On the 7th of August, 1858, Mr. Filhol, a scientist, professor of chemistry at the Faculty of Toulouse, after having analyzed the water of the Grotto, declared that it possessed none of the theraputic virtues which had been ascribed to it, and that it is simply a water suitable for drinking purposes, like that of the Gave. This declaration has never since been contradicted by any chemist, either in France or in foreign lands. Notwithstanding this scientific revelation, the Prefect persists in his designs, and access to the Grotto continues to be prohibited during the whole of the month of September. In the early part of October, however, a radical change was to take place.

The foregoing account shows the opposition Bernadette and the pilgrimage of Lourdes had to encounter. Who does not see, at the present time, in this obstinate and powerful persecution a demonstration of the truth?

And, in fact, let us suppose either that Bernadette was an imposter, or that she was herself deceived. Would not the falsehood or the involuntary illusion have been speedily discovered? At the very first interrogatory she underwent at the hands of the commissary of police, would not the deception have been taken by surprise and exposed to the light of day? The lawyers, the judges, the government prosecuting officer with their sagacity, their manner of interrogating, would they not very soon have made the child contradict herself, and discovered the falsehood, if the child were telling an untruth? Still, even the shadow of a contradiction was never discovered in her. Frequently, and of right, they threatened to send her to prison in punishment of her falsehood, if she were deceiving them. Certainly, this threat was sufficient to cause her to admit the untruth, if she had designed practising deception. An humble little peasant child, could she have persisted when realizing that her parents would share her imprisonment, with which they too were threatened? Yet the child was never shaken by this threat. Her answer was always: "They may have me taken to prison by the police, but what I have said is the truth." Neither the commissary of police, nor the prosecuting attorney, nor the judges, nor the lawyers, nor men of science, nor any one else, could ever inspire her with terror, or trouble, even for a mo-

ment, her tranquility. It was therefore irresistibly proved that she was not an imposter. There remains the possibility of an illusion or an hallucination; but, who does not see that this possibility melts away in presence of the constant sagacity of her replies, of the firmness of her character, of the candor of her soul? If any hallucination had existed, so many physicians who examined Bernadette would soon have discovered the fact. Still no one of them all ever succeeded in doing so.

It may truly be said, that this persecution presented a grand spectacle to this century!

On the one side, we find a little peasant girl; a poor, feeble child, without any education, ignorant of even the rudiments of knowledge, not knowing how to read, speaking only the local dialect, alone, and unsupported, who affirms that the most Blessed Virgin has appeared to her.

On the other hand, we have the civil authorities, the prosecuting officer, the judges, the magistrates, the prefect, the minister, doctors, learned men and writers who combat the little girl's assertions, striving to prove their falsity. They make use of all their power and learning to surprise her in a falsehood or an illusion; and after eight months of indefatigable efforts, they only succeed in showing in bold relief, thanks to the light of evidence, the truthfulness and the virtue of the child. Notwithstanding all their opposition Bernadette's account meets with belief. From the very outset, but especially after the 25th of March, on which day the Virgin told her: "I am the Immaculate Con-

ception," catholics firmly believe in the truth of the apparitions, and the uninterrupted series of miraculous cures does not cease to corroborate their belief.

Thus, by the help of Bernadette alone, with her single testimony, God had founded His undertaking, the pilgrimage of Lourdes! He wills, that henceforth the sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin shall be open to the world; all opposition yields to His will. The Prefect receives an order from the government, and from the 4th of October, 1858, the sanctuary of the Grotto was free of access to catholic peoples.

CHAPTER IX.

The Right Reverend Bertrand-Severe Laurence, Lord Bishop of Tarbes.

In His eternal councils, God had decided upon the foundation, in the middle of the nineteenth century, of a tower of refuge for the sinners of this world, and had determined to employ only a child's hand, that of a simple and innocent girl, in laying its imperishable foundations. This tower of refuge was the pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes, and Bernadette Soubirous was the child. But whilst conceiving this scheme of mercy, God in His infinite prescience, already beheld the Prelate agreeable to His heart, whom He selected over all others, to whose fidelity and wisdom, would be confided the execution of His project, who would shelter Bernadette's mission beneath the mantle of his authority, and who would erect, in honor of the immaculate Virgin, the sanctuary to whose portals she was to invite all nations.

That Bishop was Bertrand-Sevère Laurence, who, in 1858, at the time of the foundation of the pilgrimage, governed the diocese of Tarbes. God had caused him to be born, like another Ignatius of Loyola, at the foot of that grand Pyrenean chain of mountains, upon which His glory was to be reflected. The manner in which He had summoned him to the ranks of the priesthood, was, in itself, of happy augury.

Bertrand-Sevère Laurence had passed through all the ranks of ecclesiastical hierarchy; first a simple priest, next the superior of the preparatory seminary, then superior of the diocesan seminary and vicar-general, he was at last elevated to the episcopal dignity at the unanimous desire of the diocese. He became the bishop of a clergy whom he had formed and whose father he was. He united goodness with great force of character. God had endowed him with rare prudence, of which his administration afforded the best proof. A holy priest, and later, a holy bishop, he was destined all his life to be a model. There was something of olden times about him: one would have easily imagined him to be one of those bishops of the primitive church who had confessed the faith. His attachment to the Holy See was boundless. We enjoyed the privilege of meeting him at Paris, shortly after he had been consecrated bishop. With what freedom and with what energy did he not express his sentiments concerning the doctrines of Rome! During his entire episcopate, he remained faithful to those doctrines; we will soon see with what courage he defended them up to his last hour.

But he possessed these virtues, these eminent qualities, this plenitude of devotion to the Holy See, in common with other French bishops. That which creates a special position for bishop Bertrand-Sevère Laurence in the episcopacy of the nineteenth century, is that God had chosen and constituted him the bishop of the most Blessed Virgin. To make known and to cause that divine mother to be loved, first in

the Pyrenees, and then throughout the entire world, such were the privilege and the characteristic feature of his episcopal career.

In the diocese of Tarbes, Garaison, Piétat, Héas, Poueylaoun, those ancient sanctuaries of the mother of God, formerly so greatly frequented, had been sacrilegiously devastated by the impious revolution of the last century. It is impossible to describe what these sanctuaries were formerly for the inhabitants of the Pyrenees. They thronged to them, from all sides, carrying their chaplets in their hands; they prayed to the most Blessed Virgin with lively faith, they received the sacraments of penance and of the holy eucharist, that food of the strong. Brought up with this filial devotion to the mother of God, they had always preserved their faith undiminished; the Virgin had kept aloof from them the venom of heresy.

Old men, who had known these sanctuaries in better times, wept bitterly at the sight of their ruins. The younger generations, the descendants of these faithful people, saw only scattered fragments in the places where they were told that their fathers had knelt at the altars of the Virgin. Animated by the zeal of a Nehemiah, the Bishop of Tarbes undertakes to repair all these ruins, to re-build all these edifices, and to re-establish within their precincts the reign of the queen of heaven and earth. His is the glory of bringing this holy enterprise to a successful issue. In order that it may be perpetuated, he founds at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Garaison, a corps of missionaries, of apostolic men, to whom he entrusts the keeping of the

divers edifices consecrated to Mary, and the duty of evangelizing the population of the country around. Already have the inhabitants of the Pyrenees returned to their ancestral traditions by repairing again to these sanctuaries, which were so dear to their ancestors. The diocese of Tarbes has again become the privileged land of the most Blessed Virgin.

Such is the bishop whom God had kept in reserve for the church of Tarbes, and who is now called upon to pronounce judgment upon the character of the visions of Bernadette Soubirous at the Grotto of Lourdes.

By the wisdom which he displayed on this occasion, he conciliated forever the esteem of the catholic episcopacy and world.

In the first place, he takes the stand ordered by the apostle, when he says: "*Probate spiritus si ex Deo sint:* try the spirits, whether they be of God." (1) He suspends his opinion, and he begins the search after truth, with the determination not to flag until it shall have been discovered. He knows that the church has eternity before it; thus he need not be hurried in his investigation. He knows, in a word, that if this work be of God, God will be certain to render this fact manifest.

He remains therefore calm, immoveable, in presence of the impatience of the multitude, who, seized with enthusiasm at the sight of Bernadette in ecstasy, of the miraculous fountain, of the prodigies wrought by this water, and by the invocation of the most Blessed

(1) St. John, Epist. 1. c. iv. 1.

Virgin, call for the decision of the chief pastor of the diocese, with all the fervor of their desires.

He remains calm and unmoved before the persecution instituted by the Prefect. He replies with wonderful dignity to the minister of public instruction and worship who urges him in the name of religion and of the State to repress this superstitious movement.

He wills that the reserve and the attitude assumed by the bishop should be shared by the clergy. Thus, the clergy do not show themselves at the Grotto; they await events, like the bishop, and he has confidence in their wisdom.

Acting in this manner, the bishop and the clergy confound those who persecute and are hostile to religion. They make it impossible for these to bring forward the charge of fanaticism, as would inevitably have happened had they hurriedly pronounced in favor of the apparitions.

Allowing the persecution to dishonor itself by its unseemly haste and its excesses, the bishop proceeds, on the contrary, with the slowness born of wisdom. It is only when five months have elapsed after the first entrance of Bernadette into the Grotto, that, on the 18th of July, 1858, he appoints a commission of inquiry composed of the most competent persons.

For three years and a half, this commission, which is animated by the same spirit as that displayed by the bishop, pursues its labors with unvarying fidelity. Bernadette is listened to; the miracle of the fountain investigated, and the miraculous cures recognized.

It is then only, after having kept pace with all these

studies, and after the most careful examination of which the intellect of man is capable, that Bertrand-Sevère Laurence, the Lord Bishop of Tarbes, pronounces, on the 18th of January, 1862, the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter at Rome, his doctrinal decision concerning the events at Lourdes, and declares that it is reasonable to believe in the apparitions of the most Blessed Virgin to Bernadette, submitting however, as in duty bound, this action of his to the supreme authority of the Holy See.

This memorable pastoral letter once published, the designs of God meet with their fulfillment. Then, under the bishop's supervision and with his authority, those gigantic works are begun, which give promise of the marvels we, in our day, contemplate. Over the Grotto rises the subterranean church or crypt, and the crypt itself is but the foundation of a temple which Pius IX will honor with the title of Basilica.

On the 4th of April, 1864, the bishop takes possession of the Grotto in the name of the church; he blesses the statue placed in the niche where the immaculate Virgin had so often appeared to Bernadette. On that day, he himself sets in motion the first canonical procession towards the Grotto, and he inaugurates, canonically the pilgrimage of Lourdes.

On the 21st of May, 1866, after having, two days before, consecrated the altars of the crypt, he throws open, for ever, the portals of this sanctuary to the piety of catholics.

The zeal of the holy bishop does not stop here, however. At the same time, he founds near the Grotto a

house for diocesan missionaries, who are to be the chaplains of the immaculate Virgin; who are to wait upon her sanctuary, and to exercise apostolic functions towards the pilgrims. The missionaries of Our Lady of Garaison established at Lourdes, have become a religious congregation. Pius IX, approving their pious institute, has granted them the name most suitable to the guardians of the Grotto, and has styled them the "*Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception.*"

With indefatigable solicitude, the bishop, after having opened the crypt as a place of worship, occupies himself with the erection of the basilica.

Pilgrimages follow each other rapidly: miracles are wrought in presence of multitudes. Innumerable conversions take place. After all these consolations, the one which must have afforded the most pure delights to his apostolic soul, was the convocation of the Œcumenical Council.

Notwithstanding his advanced age, his apostolic labors and great sufferings, Bishop Bertrand-Sevère Laurence has no hesitation in beginning his journey. Before his departure he goes to place himself under the protection of Our Lady of Lourdes and he reaches Rome safely.

Unfortunately, however, the end of his career was at hand! It was ordained, so to speak, that he should merely greet the assembled council; he was to witness the triumph of the church from heaven. With what courage would he not have defended the infallibility of the Pope! God who understood the inmost depths of his soul took his desires into consideration, and hastened to call him to Himself.

How beautiful and how worthy of envy is his end! He dies, like a true soldier of Christ, with his armor buckled on. His soul itself stands revealed by these his last words: "I die happy, because I am at my post at the Œcumenical Council." The blessing which Pius IX sends him is received as the blessing of Jesus Christ Himself. He receives the sacraments of the church with the liveliest faith. Every thing being consummated in this world, from Rome, his spirit wanders to the miraculous Grotto: "And now," says he, from the bottom of his heart, "Our Lady of Lourdes assist me!" And feeling the effects of that assistance, he gives up his soul into the hands of the Great Shepherd, under the gaze of St. Peter and St. Paul, and with their blessing. For several days his mortal remains repose upon the soil consecrated by the blood of those apostles and of that of so many martyrs. And when they have become embalmed, as it were, by these perfumed emanations of sanctity, Rome respectfully and lovingly restores these remains to the basilica of Tarbes, whence they protect the people to whom he had been a father as well as a bishop. On the forever memorable coronation day, the Hilary of Poitiers, of modern times, confers upon him, in presence of the entire church, as it were, the title of most prudent bishop, a designation which will be perpetuated in history.

The title however, which will soar above all others, is that of bishop of the most Blessed Virgin, and of founder of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes.

And now, generations will make this pilgrimage for

centuries to come, and they will say: This edifice, whose erection the immaculate Virgin requested, was built in her honor by Bertrand-Sevère Laurence, the holy Bishop of Tarbes. And the same holy bishop still receives us here, at the crypt, at the basilica, at the miraculous Grotto. O holy bishop of the immaculate Virgin, mayest thou be eternally blessed!

Henceforward, nothing is wanting to the glory of the Right Reverend Bertrand-Sevère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes. His memory will remain blessed from century to century. His name will be forever united with that of Our Lady of Lourdes, the devotion to whom he inaugurated, and with that of Pius IX, by whom she was crowned.

Holy Bishop, I can truthfully apply to you these words which will touch so many hearts: *Beati sunt qui te viderunt, et in amicitia tua decorati sunt!* (1) Happy are the members of that great Pyrenean family who have seen you; who have experienced the vigilance of your pastoral care; whom you have loved, and to whom you leave the precious and glorious inheritance of your friendship!

(1) Eccl, 48, 11,

CHAPTER X.

On Monday, the 22d of February, the Virgin does not appear; sadness of Bernadette.—She appears, however, on the next day, the 23d. First secret which she confides to her—Message which she gives her for the Priests—Bernadette delivers this message to the Rev. Mr. Peyramale, curate of Lourdes.

It was on the 21st of February, 1858, that Bernadette had witnessed the sudden out-break of the persecution against her, which we have endeavored to portray.

The commissary of police, as we have said, had forbidden Bernadette to return to the Grotto, under pain of being thrown into prison; and, as her father had entered the chamber whilst the examination was in progress, the commissary had also threatened him and all his family with the same punishment, if he too did not extend a similar prohibition to his daughter. On his return home, Francis Soubirous, although he believed in the truth of the apparitions, felt his courage weakening, and said to the child: "You see what great misfortunes will befall us, if you return to the Grotto; so I think it is my duty to forbid your doing so, and I hope you will obey me." "Father," replied Bernadette, "I must tell you that it does not depend upon me entirely; as soon as the interior call makes itself heard, I feel that I am attracted by a superior power; but I promise you to do all that I can to resist."

The next day, Monday, the 22d of February, her parents send her early in the morning to the school which the Sisters of Nevers kept at the hospital.

Towards midday, when she was on her way home to eat her frugal dinner, all of a sudden she feels herself turned aside from the road she was following, and impelled by an irresistible power along the path which leads to the Grotto. On reaching the spot, she finds a great many people already gathered there.

The child, with her usual candid and modest appearance, kneels down; she prays; she says her beads; she even makes her prayers longer than usual, but the apparition does not take place. She rises with a saddened air; to those who question her, she replies: "I have not seen anything to-day!" and she returns home. With a daughter's affection, she relates to her father what has taken place. Francis Soubirous, who believes in the truth of the apparitions, hears then the voice of his conscience which whispers to him, that one must obey God rather than man; and reproaching himself with his act of weakness, he says to Bernadette: "You affirm that an irresistible power leads you on; I believe you, my daughter, for you have never deceived me; so I withdraw my prohibition, and I allow you to return to the Grotto."

In not manifesting herself, the queen of heaven designed showing how sovereignly independent she is in bestowing her favors. Perhaps also did she wish to make known her displeasure at the conduct which had been revealed in regard to Bernadette. This thought occurred to several persons; it is certain however, that

this day's trial in no wise lessened the esteem in which she was held. As to the poor child, she spent a sad evening. She asked herself if she might not, in some way, have offended the lady who had appeared to her, and for fear she had become unworthy of enjoying this privilege any more, she was inconsolable.

Bernadette had just become acquainted with affliction and interior alarms; her soul, for the first time, was passing through the crucible of tribulation. Without being guilty, still she had humbled herself before God; by this deep-seated suffering and sincere humility, she had only endeared herself the more to the queen of heaven.

On the next day, the 23d of February, the immaculate Virgin was to give her a signal proof of love. An immense assembly had congregated at the Massabielle rocks before sunrise. Borne on by that supernatural impulse, through whose agency she seems to be carried along rather than to walk, Bernadette reaches the Grotto. With an expression of humility and candor overcasting her countenance, she kneels down in front of the oval opening hollowed out of the rock, holding in one hand a lighted taper, and her chaplet in the other. At the same instant and following her example, all the by-standers kneel also. Bernadette begins to pray; a heavenly light soon shines forth, and she again sees, in all her splendor and unutterable beauty, the queen of heaven, who smiles upon her and draws her towards herself.

This sight suddenly throws her into ecstasy.

It is during this apparition of the 23d of February,

that the immaculate Virgin imparts to Bernadette the mission she is to fulfill towards the church; deputing her to the church, and acquainting her with the message she is to deliver. But before raising this humble girl to so high a degree of honor, the most Blessed Virgin, entrusts to her alone, as her rule of conduct, a first secret, through whose means the child will derive light and strength to carry out, in a faithful and holy manner, the mission she is to receive. Thus, whilst the most Blessed Virgin honors her, at the same time, she forewarns and protects her soul. We will allow Bernadette to relate to us this two-fold favor:

"Whilst I was praying, the lady called me by name: 'Bernadette!'

"I answered: 'Here I am.'

"'I have to tell you alone a secret, which concerns you only. Do you promise me never to repeat it to any one in this world?'

"'I promise you.'

"She then communicated that secret, manifesting great love towards me at the same time.

"Then she gave me the following order: 'You will go to the priests and tell them to have a chapel built here,' giving me to understand by the expression of her countenance, her looks and gestures, that she intended pouring forth lavishly her benefits and graces at this spot.

"After these words, I finished saying my beads. When an hour had elapsed since the beginning of the vision, she disappeared from my gaze."

The tenor of the order given to Bernadette deserves attention.

It is not to any priest in particular that the most Blessed Virgin intimates to Bernadette that she must deliver her message, but to priests, to the entire hierarchy, to simple priests, to the bishop, to the Pope. And this is what Bernadette will carry out to the very letter. First she will convey the message to the priest, to whom she is more immediately subject; that is to say, to the curate of her parish. Then she will deliver it to the commission of inquiry appointed by the bishop, and finally to the bishop himself, presiding over the tribunal he has created; and through the bishop she will transmit it to the Sovereign Pontiff. In reality, Bernadette is deputed to the entire church.

The only office to be performed by the simple priest who receives Bernadette's message, is to bring it to the notice of the bishop: he is charged with no other functions in the premises.

The bishop is sole judge, in a lower court, both of the message and of the apparitions, and he alone has the power to erect the requested sanctuary.

Let us now return to Bernadette. Once the vision at an end, she hastens to deliver her message. But the crowd which has just seen her in ecstasy, stop her, surround her, and ask her what she has heard.

She answers: "The apparition has told me two things, one concerns myself, the other is for the priests, and I am going to tell it to them immediately."

She then directs her steps towards the residence of the curate of Lourdes. The priest whom she was going to make the first confidant of her message was the Rev. Mr. Peyramale. God had reserved this great favor for

him. When Bernadette entered the presbytery, Mr. Peyramale had never seen her before; still, he recognized her from the descriptions he had received of her appearance.

The child was dressed in tattered clothing; but the most Holy Virgin who sent her, gave her a modest assurance and a simple dignity, which inspired respect.

The following dialogue takes place:

"Are you Bernadette, miller Soubirous' daughter?"

"Yes sir."

"What is the object of your visit?"

"I come on behalf of the 'lady' who appears to me at the Massabielle rocks...."

Here the worthy dean interrupted her, and, assuming a severe look in order to try her, reproaches her with attracting people by means of pretended visions, and gives her to understand that if she has the misfortune to deceive in so serious a matter, she is risking her eternal salvation.

Sustained by the Blessed Virgin, by whom she was sent, Bernadette listens with humility and maintains her composure and serenity.

"Do you know the name of this lady?"

"No sir, she did not tell it to me."

"A good many imagine that she is the Blessed Virgin."

"I do not know if it be herself. But what is true is, that she gave me this order: 'You will go to the priests and tell them to have a chapel built here.'"

The message was delivered.

The priest, who was listening attentively, knew from many reliable witnesses that Bernadette was suddenly transfigured at the Grotto, and that it was then impossible to doubt her contemplating some inhabitant of heaven. Without having seen her in ecstasy, he discovered, in this child, a prodigy of candor, an humble assurance, and a serenity which his harsh language had not been able to affect. Feeling besides that he was himself under the sway of the spirit of God, even then hovering over the presbytery, where he had before him the embassadress of the queen of heaven, this man of faith is touched and deeply moved. He begins to ask himself: "Can truth make use of any other form of expression? Is not this child the envoy and the organ of the most Holy Virgin?" In order to satisfy himself however, he requests Bernadette to give him some certain sign. "It is now winter; tell the lady who appears to you, on my behalf, that if she desire the chapel built, she must cause the wild briar beneath her feet to bloom."

"I will do so," is Bernadette's humble answer.

And she takes leave of him.

In reality, Mr. Peyramale had just received the confidant and the messenger of the queen of heaven. In order to be certain of the truth, he had required a miracle: the blooming of the wild briar in mid-winter. Two days later, the immaculate Virgin responds to his desire, not by making the wild briar bloom, but by causing a miraculous fountain to gush from the rock of the Grotto, which fountain was to become an inexhaustible source of prodigies.

On the 25th of February, this fountain traversed the rock, its first drops of water rose to the surface of the earth heaped up at the rear of the Grotto, and on the very next day, miraculous cures attested the truth of the apparitions of the most Holy Virgin.

In presence of such miracles, the curate of Lourdes no longer doubts Bernadette's mission.

On the 2nd of March, the child comes to transmit to him again the wishes of the immaculate Virgin. This time, she meets with an entirely different reception.—"I believe you," says he to Bernadette. "What you ask of me, however, in the name of the apparition, does not depend upon me. It depends upon the bishop, whom I have already informed concerning what is taking place. I will go to see him, and acquaint him with this new step. He alone can act."

From the day when the miraculous cures were effect ed by the water of the fountain of the Grotto, Mr. Peyramale took the humble Bernadette under his protection, for he recognized in her the confidant and the messenger of the most Blessed Virgin. Whilst the persecution lasted he defended her with the greatest courage. And during all the time Bernadette remained at Lourdes, that is to say, for eight years, the magnanimous pastor, following the example and the recommendations of his bishop, showed her all the solicitude of a father.

CHAPTER XI.

Wednesday, February 24th, 1858, eighth apparition; the immaculate Virgin tells Bernadette that sinners must be prayed for, and she pronounces the word "Penance!" three times. To the request that the wild briar should be made to bloom, her only reply is a smile. Second secret. Bernadette gives an account of this vision to the curate of Lourdes. Effects of the word "Penance!" pronounced three times by the immaculate Virgin.

On the 24th of February, at sunrise, the Grotto was, as usual, filled with an immense throng. A great many knew that Bernadette, to carry out Mr. Peyramale's order, was to request the immaculate Virgin to cause the wild briar beneath her feet to bloom, as proof of the truth of the apparitions.

Would the wild briar bloom?

Bernadette arrives; she kneels down; in an instant, the immense multitude imitate her: it is as though a supernatural breath has blown over every head and made it bow down before God.

The immaculate Virgin appears to Bernadette, who is immediately wrapt in ecstasy. All those who can see her are satisfied that she is in the presence of some supernatural being, because her countenance reflects a light and a beauty which are not of this world. After she has been for some time in this state, the queen of heaven tells her to pray for sinners, to kiss the ground for the conversion of sinners; she afterwards com-

mands her to ascend from the bank of the Gave, on her knees (1), as far as the bottom of the Grotto. The child obeys; she advances on her knees to the designated spot. Whilst doing so, however, she says three times, her voice being very distinct to those around her: *Penance, penance, penance!*

This being done, she continues to pray for a few moments more, and the vision disappears.

Let us now listen to Bernadette herself relating this vision to the curate of Lourdes:

"I have seen the apparition, and I told her:

"The curate asks you for some proofs; for instance, he would like you to make the wild briar, beneath your feet, bloom, because my word is not sufficient for the priests, and they do not wish to rely upon what I say."

"Then she smiled, but said nothing.

"Afterwards she told me to pray for sinners, to kiss the ground for their conversion, and commanded me to ascend from the bank of the Gave to the bottom of the Grotto. And she said three times: 'Penance, penance, penance!' I repeated these words, dragging myself on my knees to the designated spot, where she revealed to me a second secret which is personal to myself, and then she disappeared."

These words of the most Blessed Virgin to Bernadette: "Sinners must be prayed for," and the cry: *Penance, penance, penance!* immediately find a deeply sympathetic echo in the heart of every one at Lourdes.

"It was during the holy season of Lent," we are told by the Reverend Mr. Fourcade, the first historian of

(1) At that time the Gave flowed alongside of the Grotto.

Our Lady of Lourdes; "the church which was, at no time, sufficiently large, seemed to shrink more hopelessly in size than ever. The word of God, although proclaimed by known and familiar voices, was listened to with the most respectful attention; the confessionals were literally besieged; the communion rail could no longer accommodate the numbers who desired holy communion. Never had any missionary priest, foreign to the place, obtained such edifying results as did the Grotto of the Massabielle rocks. This style of preaching, adopted by the immaculate Virgin, which began at Lourdes, was about to be heard over the entire world, and effect miraculous conversions everywhere.

With regard to the miracle of the sudden blooming of the wild briar in mid-winter, if it failed to take place, it was because the queen of heaven intended to perform another, which should be more worthy of her sovereign power, and especially of her maternal goodness. It will not be an ephemeral miracle, or one accessible only to a limited number of witnesses, as would have been that of the wild briar in bloom, but a permanent miracle which will last as long as the centuries: it will be the instantaneous gushing forth of a fountain, small at first, but soon to become rich and copious, the first drops of whose water are destined to inaugurate that series of prodigies which the catholic world has been admiring for the last twenty years. In one day more, the miraculous fountain will have sprung forth from the bosom of the rock, at the command of the immaculate Virgin; and two days later, the miraculous cures will have been inaugurated.

CHAPTER XII.

February 25th—Thursday in the first week of Lent—ninth apparition. Third and last secret. The miraculous Fountain of the Grotto.

On the 25th of February, an immense multitude, come together from all parts of the Department and the surrounding country, had assembled in Lourdes. At sunrise the whole gathering had collected around the Grotto. For these simple country people filled with faith, the celestial personage who appeared to Bernadette was none other than the most Blessed Virgin. They were correct in their opinion. Their belief will soon be confirmed by miracles, for it is by invoking the most Blessed Virgin that the sick will be miraculously cured.

This day is to be the occasion of a great prodigy. Bernadette reaches the Grotto. She kneels as usual, holding in one hand a taper, and in the other her chaplet. A deep silence reigns all around. Is the immaculate Virgin going to appear to her? Only a few moments have gone by, when Bernadette is transfigured and assumes the attitude of an angel. By the light and the beauty of her countenance, those who are near her are convinced that she is contemplating a supernatural being.

"It is the most Holy Virgin who is appearing to her!" murmur the crowd with bated breath.

The queen of heaven, who is in fact before her, allows her to enjoy her presence for some time, her candid soul continuing in ecstasy.

What takes place afterwards? Bernadette will reveal it to us.

"The immaculate Virgin attracting me by a love more tender than ever, then said:

"'My daughter, I wish to confide to you, but always to you alone, for it concerns you only, a last secret, which, no more than the other two, can you reveal to any one in this world.'

"I answer:

"'I promise you.'

"She then told me this third secret.

"After having granted me so great a favor, she was silent for a moment, as though to allow me to enjoy the secret she had entrusted to my keeping.

"Afterwards she said to me:

"'And now my daughter, go drink and wash yourself at the fountain, and eat of the herbs which grow alongside.'

"Looking around me and not seeing any fountain, without losing sight of her who was speaking to me, I turn to go towards the Gave. With an exclamation and a sign, she stops me:

"'Do not go there; I did not tell you to drink from the Gave; go to the fountain: it is here.'

"And extending her hand, she pointed with her finger towards the same spot at the rear of the Grotto, to which on the morning of the day previous she had ordered me to ascend on my knees. I hasten to obey,

and go on my knees towards the designated place. I see no fountain, but only a few herbs scattered here and there. To carry out the order I had just received, I begin to scratch the earth, and to dig out a little hollow. All of a sudden, a few drops of water ooze up beneath my hand. The little hollow becomes filled; it is however only water mixed with earth. I try to drink some of it three times, but disgust prevent me. Still, wishing at any cost to obey the order which had been given to me, I make a fresh effort: I drink some of this water; I wash myself and I eat of the herbs which had been pointed out to me. By this time, the water overflows the edges of the little hollow I had dug, and begins to trickle along the sloping soil in a slender stream.

"I had executed all the orders I had just received. The immaculate Virgin showed her satisfaction, and, after having gazed upon me with goodness, disappeared."

Before alluding to the miraculous features of the fountain, a remark must be made concerning the interior appearance of the Grotto. The pilgrim, who sees, at the present time, the floor of the Grotto, with its smooth surface, and the bare rock, cannot understand these words spoken by Bernadette: "*I ascended* from the bank of the Gave, to the spot which was pointed out to me at the rear of the Grotto; *I began to scratch the earth.*" It is therefore necessary that they be explained. At the time the apparitions occurred, the rear of the Grotto offered a very different appearance from what it does in our day. Then the earth, heaped

up against the rock, reached an elevation of about six feet, and formed a steep slope. A few herbs grew here and there.

With regard to the miraculous fountain which welled up from the rock at the spot where it is seen to-day, it had to mount up to the surface of this pile of earth, in which Bernadette scooped out a little hollow with her hand. All this earth having been removed, the orifice of the fountain, through the rock, remained exposed to view, and the floor of the Grotto was smoothed down, thus showing the bare rocks. One can see the waters of the fountain escaping from this miraculous reservoir, forming a small cascade, and gliding with a gentle murmur into the channel which leads them to the three cocks of the outside fountain, and then to the house in which is to be found the bathing tank reserved for the sick.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Fountain of the Grotto—its miraculous features.—The rock struck by Moses in the desert, and the rock of the Pyrenees. Language of the Virgin to Bernadette: "Go drink, and wash yourself at the fountain."

Here we must remember that a miracle, whether wrought by man, by an angel, or by the queen of men and angels, is a communication of that infinite power which has acted upon what did not exist with sovereign empire, extracting thence whatever does exist, the spiritual as well as the material world. The Almighty uttered but one word, and of a sudden the army of heavenly spirits, who were not, presented itself before Him saying: Here we are! He spoke one word more, and suddenly the sun, the luminous orbs, the legions of stars, the entire material creation, all of which were not, presented themselves before Him, saying: Here we are!

But at the same time that He forms the material world out of nothing, He gives it eternal laws, and causes it to move in a sphere of eternal harmony, so that the ocean which belts the earth, and which when it raises its billows towards the skies, seeming as though it would sweep away every thing, still will never go beyond the grain of sand which He has imposed as its barrier upon the shore; so that the innumerable planets, which shine over our heads, and

which, since the beginning, traverse the fathomless depths of space, will never exhibit a variation either of a moment or of a line from the path which He has marked out unto them. This ocean and these planets know what it is to obey their CREATOR.

"Thou thyself, O Lord, alone," sang the children of Israel to God in a sublime canticle, "Thou hast made heaven, and the heaven of heavens, and all the host thereof: the earth and all things that are in it: the seas and all that are therein: and Thou givest life to all these things, and the host of heaven adores Thee! *Tu ipse, Domine, solus, tu fecisti cœlum, et cœlum cœlorum, et omnem exercitum eorum: terram et universa quæ in ea sunt: maria et omnia quæ in eis sunt: et tu vivificasti omnia hæc: et exercitus cœli te adorat.*" (Lib. ii. Esdrae, ix, 6.)

Such are the works of the CREATOR, and such is His dominion over them. Not only 'the host of heaven,' but the entire creation falls prostrate beneath His gaze and adores!

God can communicate this infinite power, whenever He wills, and in the measure of His will, to man, to angels, and especially to the queen of men and angels. Nature then obeys them, as it does the Creator Himself!

This principle once established, let us carry ourselves, in spirit, to the desert, where the people of God are perishing with thirst. Death, in its different stages, is already depicted upon the countenances of all. God wishes to show this people His omnipotence and His infinite goodness. Moses, at His command, strikes

the rock, and all of a sudden torrents of living waters burst from the rock, which is rent asunder and torn open at the voice of the Creator. And this entire people, who represent the church as the rock represents Christ, quench their thirst and are restored to life. Such is the scene in the desert.

There however, alongside of the invisible God, Moses, the servant, alone appears; his is the instrumentality through which the prodigy is performed. Here, at the rock in the Pyrenees, it is no longer a servant, whom the Almighty wishes nature to obey. He has at His side the mother of the Incarnate Word, the mother of God; herself whom He has exalted above the most inaccessible heights of His inaccessible light, unto the right hand of His son, engendered from all eternity, and whom she herself engendered in the order of time; herself, whom the most Blessed Trinity has crowned, and on whose head the Incarnate Word, Christ triumphant and resurrected, has placed a crown; herself, whom He established queen forever, sovereign of heaven and earth, and who, under this title, is possessed of absolute dominion over the entire creation; who, in virtue of her dignity of mother of God, is served as well by the Seraphim as by all intelligent creatures made after the image of the Creator; and by all those suns and worlds scattered throughout space, with all the unintelligent or material creatures which they enclose within their limits; herself, whom He loves above all creatures, above all the celestial hierarchies, with a love proportionate to her incomprehensible dignity of mother of God, to the incompre-

hensible sanctity which shines forth in her, and to the incomprehensible fires of charity which are enkindled in her soul; herself, in a word, to whom He has entrusted all His treasures of grace, in order that she may scatter them broad-cast over His people—over the church. It is no longer Moses therefore who appears at the rock in the Pyrenees, but the immaculate Virgin, the queen, the sovereign of the world, the most blessed mother of the Incarnate Word; and she appears with her sceptre in her hand, and wearing on her brow the eternal crown of heaven!

Now, what is it that occurs, when the mother of the Creator, when the sovereign of heaven and earth says to Bernadette: *Go drink, and wash yourself at the fountain?* The miracle wrought in the desert repeats itself; there, at the touch of the rod of Moses, water gushes in torrents from the rock; here, from this rock in the Pyrenees, at the command of the queen of heaven, the miraculous fountain springs up: the willing rock becomes transformed into a reservoir of water, and the fountain, which a sign from and a glance of the immaculate Virgin has just created, finds its first drops of liquid permeating the soil until it reaches the fingers of Bernadette.

Let us listen to the Bishop of Poitiers, the historian, or rather the artist who transferred this grand scene to canvass:

"This land, this neighborhood, has been upheaved and completely aroused by the apparition of the countenance of the Lord: "*A facie Domini mota est terra;*" for it was indeed the Divinity itself which was reflect-

ed in the features of the spotless Virgin. What do I say? The entire universe has experienced the effects of this commotion, from the moment when, in virtue of the celestial command, the stone was here hollowed out into the shape of a basin and a reservoir, and the rock was transformed into a fountain of water, which has since never ceased to flow: *A facie Dei qui convertit petram in stagna aquarum, et rupem in fontes aquarum.* (Ps. cxiii, 5–8.)

"On the 25th of February, the young girl received the order *to go and drink at the fountain*, and the fountain which until then had no existence (the whole country is prepared to testify to this fact), having begun to ooze up beneath the fingers of the child, has never ceased to flow since. Twenty years have elapsed, and the number of those who have drank the water of the fountain of Lourdes can no longer be calculated, and the entire universe is teeming with facts concerning instantaneous cures, prodigies so manifest, that the argument upon which the church is wont to base her judgment, the argument of divine attestation miraculously formulated, is found here, not by accident, but in a permanent and nearly continual state."

Thus, according to the modern Hilary of Poitiers, the fountain, which did not exist, has sprung up, at a sign given by the Virgin, from the rock in the Pyrenees, as, in olden times, in the desert, the living waters had burst from the rock when it was touched by the rod of Moses. And the creation of the miraculous fountain dates from the instant, when the immaculate Virgin, invested with the omnipotence of God, has, by

a single glance, transformed the rock into a fountain. Without a doubt, it has been understood in this manner by catholics of all countries, who, in this connection, exclaim with David: "How magnificent are Thy works, O Lord!" Thou, who by one word, hast created the basin of the seas and the waters by which it is filled, by a single word also pronounced by her, to whom Thou hast entrusted Thy omnipotence, Thou hast hollowed out this reservoir in the rock of the Pyrenees, and Thou hast filled it with a miraculous water! In the desert, it is from the stone itself, as the children of Israel affirm, that Thou hast extracted water to quench their thirst: *Et aquam de petra eduxisti eis sitientibus.* (1) Here, among the Pyrenees, it is again from a stone that Thou hast drawn the water to allay the thirst of an entire people of believers!

In the method adopted of causing the fountain to appear, the immaculate Virgin displays her sovereign power, and delights both in trying the faith of Bernadette and that of the multitude by whom she is surrounded. "The fountain is there!" It is there, where no human eye has ever seen it, or could ever see it, since it did not exist. It is there, already formed, where you do not see it as yet, having its reservoir in the rock itself. But, at first I will only cause a few drops of its water to ascend to the surface of the ground, by which its orifice is concealed. These drops will suffice to show that it is my fountain. As soon as these first few drops will have reached the hand of Bernadette, and when she will have enjoyed the privi-

(1) Lib. ii. Esd. ix. 15.

lege of drinking them, they will suddenly react upon the souls of the spectators, inspiring them with the thought that this fountain is the Virgin's, and that these miraculous waters will produce wonderful effects. And a day will hardly have gone by before they will have performed prodigies.

In how many respects is this fountain holy and miraculous? It flows in that sanctuary upon which the glory of the thrice holy God has descended. It issues from the very base of that throne of clemency whence the immaculate Virgin wishes to reign over us. As, by a sign, the Virgin has created the fountain, so also, by a sign, she feeds its reservoir and makes its waters flow. It is therefore, in every respect, the fountain of the most Holy Virgin! But the immaculate Virgin is thus prodigal of miracles in bringing it forth from the rock, only because she intends to be still more prodigal of prodigies, by the virtues which she will communicate to its waters. By their use she contemplates curing those suffering ones who will come and ask, with faith, for the recovery of their health.

From the day following that on which the fountain appeared, the Virgin wishes that its waters should begin to manifest their miraculous power, and that the miracle should afterwards continue, so to say, uninterruptedly in presence of the whole universe. But she heals bodily infirmities with so great clemency, only to show with what ardent desires she longs to cure souls, and with what happiness she will cure them; she will bring them back to life by plunging them into the living waters of grace: into the ocean of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, of which the fountain of

the Grotto, with its reservoir and its waters, is only the symbol and the representation.

Let the sick then be carried, with lively faith, to the miraculous fountain. Let them be brought from all parts of the world; that water is flowing there for no other purpose than to heal them. The most holy mother of God has created this fountain, which is called the fountain of the immaculate Virgin, only in order to display her influence with her Divine Son, and her mercy towards men. If it be not possible for one to go to Lourdes to drink of the water and be bathed in the miraculous fountain, let its all-powerful waters be sent to the farthest extremities of the earth unto the sick. And if they cannot reach a great many of these, let the suffering seek, in spirit, the Grotto of Lourdes; let them invoke, from their inmost hearts, the immaculate Virgin: "O, Our Lady of Lourdes, grant that we may experience the miraculous virtues of the water of thy fountain, and cure us!" Mother-like, she hears the voice of her children wheresoever they may be in this world; no matter how remote the desert, or with what kind of destitution they may be afflicted, she will be even more deeply touched by their fate than if she saw them gathered together at her feet in her sanctuary. And Lourdes will be found wherever on earth there is a single sufferer, who will invoke the Virgin out of the depths of his heart!

But they who are to be brought to this sanctuary of clemency are those who are afflicted at heart, and in the inmost recesses of their souls, by the mortal wounds and ailment of sin. Among those who ask for

the healing of their bodies, there are some who will not be cured, because it is better for their eternal salvation that they should not be. But all who, from the bottom of their hearts, implore that their souls may be healed, will, without exception, be cured. Whosoever was the first to be plunged into the pool of Bethsaida, after the angel had moved the waters, was cured of whatever infirmity or malady he was suffering. *Sanus fiebat a quacumque detinebatur infirmitate.* (1) The pool at Jerusalem was only the symbol of this new pool formed by the grace and the merits of Jesus Christ, and open, night and day, to all the peoples of the earth until the end of time. It is no angel who stirs up the depths of this sacred pool, of this ocean of repairing grace: it is the immaculate Virgin herself, the most holy mother of God, and our mother. Whatever may be the spiritual disease of the sinner: whatever may be the wounds and the slavery of sin, the mother who, at the foot of the cross, co-operated in our redemption, says to the sinner: "Come, it is I who have, by my intercession, stirred up all this ocean of repairing grace; it is I who have moved, who have touched the heart of my Divine Son in which this ocean is contained. Hasten to plunge into its waves; there is neither stain, nor evil, nor sin, which they are not sovereignly empowered to wipe out."

No, there does not exist a sinner upon earth who cannot obtain pardon from Jesus Christ, if, from the bottom of his heart, he will only sue for it through the intercession of His most Holy Mother!

(1) Joan. v, 4.

CHAPTER XIV.

On the 26th of February, Friday, in the first week of Lent, the immaculate Virgin does not appear to Bernadette. Reason for which this occurred.—Why the most Blessed Virgin has already revealed the three secrets to her. Increase of the fountain — Cures effected on the morning of the 26th of February, by the use of the water of the Grotto, and the invocation of the most Blessed Virgin.—On the same day, miraculous cure of Louis Bourriette, a quarry man at Lourdes.

The apparition on Thursday, February 25th, and the gushing forth of the miraculous fountain had electrified the catholic populations which had assembled at Lourdes. That particular Thursday was the great market day at Tarbes, and many persons among the eye-witnesses of the events described being compelled to visit this, the chief city of the Department, on that account, related the two-fold prodigy which had been wrought in the morning.

Thus, by nightfall on that same day, the news had spread throughout the Department and the neighboring towns. The inhabitants of these various centres immediately set out from home; and, traveling all night, they reach Lourdes before day-break. A great many strangers, who were at Lourdes on Thursday, delayed their departure in order to repair to the Grotto the next day at early dawn. Thus, from five

to six thousand persons, strangers as well as inhabitants of Lourdes, were awaiting the prodigy, and blocking up the approaches to the Grotto, before sunrise. As soon as Bernadette, surrounded by her companions, appears in sight on the road leading to the Grotto of the Massabielle rocks, this exclamation escapes the lips of all: "The saint! the saint!" They salute her as they would an angel; they seek to touch her clothing. As to herself, entirely filled with the happiness of again beholding the celestial beauty of the lady who has appeared to her, she heeds not these marks of veneration; she advances modestly towards the Grotto, and kneels down humbly opposite the little sanctuary hollowed out in the rock, holding in one hand a lighted taper and in the other her chaplet. At the same moment the entire multitude which surrounds her kneel also, uniting their prayers with those of Bernadette.

She begins her beads, saying them with fervor, her eyes being riveted upon the spot where the apparition shows itself; but she remains in her ordinary state; there is neither supernatural radiation of light, nor ecstasy. An hour goes by; she leaves the kneeling posture and says to the crowd around her: "To-day, the apparition has not shown itself—I did not see any thing."

The immaculate Virgin, who loves Bernadette, gives her thus a striking lesson; she teaches her that it is not in her power to cause the august mother of God to descend from heaven; and in this manner she strengthens the child's humility. Bernadette is des-

tined to enjoy popularity and celebrity beyond anything of the kind which is to fall to the lot of woman in the present century. Nothing less than a miracle of the most holy mother of God will suffice for the preservation of her candor and humility, in the midst of the attentions and veneration by which she is to be surrounded.

Here an important remark is to be made: it is, that at the ninth apparition, on the 25th of February, the day on which the miraculous spring bursts forth, the most Blessed Virgin has already entrusted her triple secret to Bernadette. The divine mother has, in a manner, hastened to encompass Bernadette with a triple rampart, behind which she is to be preserved from every attack of the world and of hell. She has been clad in this suit of armor; and the most Blessed Virgin has supplied her with a shield which no hostile dart will ever be able to perforate. She has enkindled this triple beacon in her soul in order that its unceasing glare light up her path during her entire life. She has bound the child to herself by these triple bonds of divine charity, fastening the fetters with her own immaculate hands, so that no creature will ever have the power to tear them asunder.

These three secrets are an inaccessible sanctuary in which the queen of heaven and Bernadette are by themselves, and where Bernadette may unceasingly scrutinize the gaze of the immaculate Virgin, in order that she may therein discover the will and the good pleasure of God.

By means of these three secrets Bernadette's soul is henceforth like unto a vessel which, under full pressure of canvass, journeys on the ocean of time towards eternity, and whose pilot is the queen of heaven.

Thus, the christian reader may be re-assured, this popularity, this unheard of celebrity in the present century, these homages, this respect, these marks of veneration, surrounded by which she is to live, will never succeed even in disturbing Bernadette's humility. Her soul will remain as innocent as the topmost peaks of the Pyrenees on which glitters the virgin snow which has never felt the impress of human footfall since the creation.

And the nineteenth century has already witnessed this prodigy for twenty years!

In not manifesting herself, the immaculate Virgin had given Bernadette a lesson of humility, which was incomparably more useful to her than the sweetness of ecstasy.

This twenty-sixth day of February, however, does not go by without affording consolation to Bernadette and to the pilgrims congregated at the Grotto. It is marked by other marvels in which the power and the clemency of the mother of God are clearly revealed. It is a day forever memorable, because it is to afford the inauguration of that series of miraculous cures which has lasted down to the present time, and which will continue from century to century.

The fountain had increased in volume. On the day previous, as we have said, merely a feeble rill trickled from the little hollow scooped out by Bernadette. On

this day the stream was of the size of one's finger; but the water is still mixed with earth, because its course lies through the layer of soil overlaying the rock. Each successive day finds it increasing more and more in volume. It will soon become clear and limpid. The feeble rill will be transformed into a powerful water-spout, and in less than a month it will have attained the proportions it reaches at the present day, furnishing a volume of OVER ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND LITRES OF WATER DAILY. (1)

This quantity is certainly more than sufficient to allow all pilgrims to take to their homes some of the water of the holy fountain, and to permit its being sent to the different parts of the catholic world, where, in both hemispheres, the devotion it excites causes it to be in great demand. As the most Blessed Virgin had, the day before, ordered Bernadette to drink and wash herself at this fountain, the thought, which suggested itself to several of the witnesses of her actions. was that this miraculous water might probably possess the power of curing the sick who would drink it, or who would pour it over their wounds or any diseased part of their bodies, whilst invoking the name and the all-powerful influence of the most Blessed Virgin. This thought, which came from above, excited the most lively confidence in souls, and beginning on the morning of the 26th of February, rumors of several miraculous cures, whose truth was speedily confirmed, began to spread.

The glorious queen of heaven, the mother of mercy,

(1) The litre is equivalent to 61,028 cubic inches.

wishes to crown this memorable day with a shining miracle, which will be evident to the whole city of Lourdes. She works this miracle in favor of a quarry man named Louis Bourriette, who is the father of a family.

Twenty years before, whilst, in company with his brother Joseph, he was charging a mine, a sudden explosion occurred. Joseph is instantaneously killed by scattering fragments of stone; Louis is not mortally wounded, but his face is terribly burnt by powder, and a piece of stone makes a gaping and deep wound in his right eye. The unfortunate man suffers such excruciating pains that, for three months, a straight jacket is necessary to keep him in bed. Later, cerebral irritation is so great that, during two years, he has attacks of insanity. Then his health gradually improves, and he becomes able to resume his work. But notwithstanding the care given him from the very outset by Doctor Dozous, his eye is almost entirely lost; he cannot distinguish a man from a tree; a dense cloud always appears to be before him; objects seem to be merely black masses. In the opinion of the doctor, his condition is incurable.

Bourriette, struck with the recital of the cures obtained on the morning of that very day, and with all that was said of the fountain of the Grotto and of the apparitions to Bernadette, conceives the hope that with the assistance of this water and by invoking the the most Blessed Virgin, he will be cured.

He calls his daughter and says to her: "Go get me some of the water of the Grotto. The Blessed Virgin,

if it be she, has only to will it, to cure me."

A half hour later the child returns, bringing a little of this water.

"Father," says she, "it is only muddy water."

"Never mind!" replies Bourriette.

And he begins to pray. With all the fervor of his soul he invokes the most Blessed Virgin; he rubs his eye with the miraculous water; all of a sudden he experiences the mysterious process of healing. Overflowing with joy, he utters a loud cry: "I am cured!" he exclaims. "It is the most Blessed Virgin who has cured me!"

The dense cloud with which his eye was formerly veiled is now scattered; there simply remains a slight fogginess of vision; he again rubs his eye with the water of the holy fountain and he sees things distinctly.

The next day, meeting the doctor on the public square, Bourriette says to him: "I am cured! it is the most Blessed Virgin who has cured me!" The doctor can hardly believe him. But he possesses an infallible means of satisfying himself as to the truth without loss of time. He writes in pencil on a piece of paper; then, covering Bourriette's sound eye with his hand, he tells him: "If you can read this, I will believe you." And immediately, without a shadow of hesitation, he reads the words: "Bourriette has an incurable amaurosis, and his sight will never be restored."

The doctor, seeing that all the laws of nature are overthrown, exclaims: "It is a miracle! yes, it is a real miracle!"

These words are speedily re-echoed all over Lourdes.

The very day on which he was cured, Bourriette, in his exceeding joy, relates to his friends and to every one he meets, that his sight has been restored by the most Blessed Virgin. All the inhabitants knew him. The miracle was self-evident. It is the most Blessed Virgin who has wrought this miracle, for it is by invoking her holy name that the sufferer was cured. The citizens do not entertain the slightest doubt in this regard; their gratitude towards the queen of heaven breaks forth spontaneously.

"Bourriette however," says Mr. Henry Lasserre, "was not the only ones whose grateful testimony for unexpected happiness was heard on different occasions. Facts of a similar nature had occurred in other houses of the city. Several persons living at Lourdes, Mary Daube, Bernarde Soubie, Fabian Baron, had suddenly arisen from beds of suffering where they had been compelled to lie for years, owing to different diseases reputed to be incurable, and they boldly announced that they had been cured by the water of the Grotto. Jane Crassus' hand, which had been paralyzed for ten years, had been straightened out and had recovered the plenitude of its activity by the use of the miraculous water." (1)

The evening of this beautiful day is celebrated by a touching manifestation. Almost the entire city of Lourdes seems to have given itself a rendez-vous at the Massabielle rocks, in order to testify its gratitude

(1) The characteristic features of these different cures have been officially recognized in the reports of the medical experts addressed to the Commission appointed by the Bishop.

to the mother of God. Those who were cured in the morning are among the first on the spot. Bourriette is there with all his family. His fellow quarry-men surround him. In presence of this Grotto and of this miraculous fountain, every one expresses an unutterable feeling of happiness. For all, the Grotto is the sanctuary of the most Holy Virgin. From this throne of clemency, whence she has appeared to them, and on which their faith contemplates her as present, they feel that this divine mother is about to bless them. Full of faith, they are prostrate on their knees before her; they pray to her; they invoke her; they express to her their gratitude and their thanksgiving. Although her visible being remains concealed, still she is there, seated upon her throne; she makes her presence felt by the interior joy which she pours out into souls. A great many had thought of bringing tapers and wax candles. At nightfall these are lighted, and the holy Grotto becomes resplendent. At this spectacle, prayer ascends even more fervently than before, towards the mother of God. These private prayers are insufficient however to express the feelings which are uppermost in the hearts of all. Soon, by a spontaneous and unanimous accord, without any preconcerted arrangement or plan, an immense chorus chants in unison the Litany of the most Blessed Virgin; it is really a song of triumph; invocation succeeds invocation with the most unbounded enthusiasm. "Holy mother of God, pray for us! Cause of our joy, pray for us! Help of christians, pray for us! Healer of the sick, pray for us!...."

In return for this homage, as a reward for such faith, the queen of heaven, surrounded by legions of celestial spirits, invisibly raises her hand and blesses this multitude, this little city, and, with it, France and the universe. This blessing teems with benefits, and is the happy presage of the conversion of innumerable sinners and of entire nations.

The throne of clemency of this divine queen was to remain forever established on this rock in the Pyrenees.

The neighboring people had just witnessed a scene from heaven; each one returns home feeling his soul inundated by the ineffable peace.

All night long, these countless tapers, symbolizing the ardor of charity, burn in the sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin. And this improvised feast is the inauguration of those admirable illuminations which, a few months later when the persecution will have ceased, will each night rejoice the pilgrims and the inhabitants of Lourdes.

CHAPTER XV.

Extending from the 26th of February to the 4th of March, 1858, which date completes the fifteen days.—What it is that the most Blessed Virgin wishes to teach us by ordering Bernadette, at each apparition, to drink and wash herself at the fountain of the Grotto, and to eat of the herbs which grow by its side.

In the apparition of the 21st of February, 1858, the first Sunday of Lent, the immaculate Virgin had said to Bernadette: "Sinners must be prayed for."

In the apparition on the 24th of February, the Wednesday following, this divine mother had uttered from the bottom of her heart the thrice repeated word: "Penance! penance! penance!" which word Bernadette, who was in ecstasy, had repeated three times with her.

It is after giving sinners the assurance that they will be prayed for, and after having said to them in motherly and persuasive tones: "Penance! become converted!" that, without delay, on the next day, Thursday, February 25th, she makes the miraculous spring of the Grotto gush forth beneath the hand of Bernadette, and commands the child to drink and to wash herself at this spring and to eat of the herbs which grow at its edge. And at each subsequent apparition, until the 4th of March, the last day of the fifteen, she repeats the same order.

These apparitions not offering specially distinctive features, we need not enter into their description. In this chapter we will seek to discover what the most Blessed Virgin wishes to teach us by this order, intimated daily to Bernadette, to drink and wash herself at the fountain of the Grotto, and to eat of the herbs which grow by its side.

Water, in the scriptures, as is shown by countless texts, is looked upon as symbolizing grace. In the gospel according to Saint John, the Saviour of the world expresses himself in the following terms:

" . . . .The water that I shall give him, shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into everlasting life." (1)

And: " . . . . He that shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall not thirst forever." (2)

Jesus Christ wished that, in His church, water, by means of baptism, should confer upon us the grace of regeneration, and make us children of God.

And the water of the miraculous fountain, which the immaculate Virgin caused to spring up at the Grotto, is the symbol and the representation of that water of grace of which the Saviour speaks, and which springs up into everlasting life.

It is also the representation and the symbol of that infinite fountain of grace and mercy which flows from the five wounds of Jesus Christ. This fountain is also active in the church. The just constantly avail themselves of its stream, in order that their thirst may be quenched by the living waters of grace, whilst sinners

(1) John iv. 14. (2) Ibid. iv. 13.

who have died through sin, plunge into its current in order that their life may be restored, and that they may be reconciled to God by the sacrament of penance.

Thus, when the immaculate Virgin orders Bernadette to drink and wash herself daily at the miraculous fountain, she addresses all souls regenerated in Jesus Christ, all the children of the catholic church, all nations, and all ages.

She says to the just: "Drink, and wash yourselves daily at the fountain of living waters of the grace of Jesus Christ. Seek in that divine spring, of which the fountain of the Grotto is only the image, supernatural life, whose plenitude increases unceasingly, and which lessens thirst after earthly things more and more, and intensifies thirst for heaven."

She says to sinners: "Wash yourselves and drink copious draughts at the infinite fountain of grace and mercy, which gushes from the five wounds of the Saviour, flowing over you, and over your souls, by means of the sacrament of penance. Become converted. However great and numerous your sins may be, this fountain which springs from the gaping side and from the wounds of Jesus Christ, my Divine Son, will wash them away forever. Come: however deeply or mortally wounded you may be; come: fear not, I myself, your mother, will plunge you into these saving waters, and will withdraw you from them completely healed, whiter than snow, and you will be forever the children of God, and my own dearly beloved children.

"As to the manner of approaching this infinite fountain of the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, which

flows over you and brings new life in the sacrament of penance, I have taught it to you when I ordered Bernadette to mount from the bank of the Gave to the highest part of the Grotto, telling her to ascend this steep slope on her knees, and causing her to kiss the ground frequently, whilst pronouncing, after me, from the bottom of her heart, the words: Penance, penance, penance! It is thus that you must do; first, throwing yourselves upon your knees, strike your breasts, saying in presence of heaven and earth: I have sinned. Prostrating yourselves, kiss the earth as a mark of repentance. Then say with the prodigal son: 'I will arise, and I will go to my father.' I will go to him on my knees; I will ascend the abrupt slope which leads from sin to grace; I will overturn every obstacle, and when, finally, I will have reached His presence, I will say to Him: My father! I am not worthy to be called your son. At that very instant, throwing his arms around your neck, he will weep tenderly over you, and will press you to his heart. His kiss of peace, He will give it to you in the sacrament of penance. By confessing your sins, you will plunge your soul into the infinite fountain of the merits of Jesus Christ, whence it will emerge whiter than snow! Come then, christian penitents, the return of the prodigal son to the embrace of his father possesses a sweetness surpassing that of all the joys of this world, which spring from the earth, whilst the joy of repentance comes from heaven. How happy the moment when you will be able to say: Again I am the child of God! and how happy also the moment for myself, when I,

in reply, will be able to say: I have found my son who was lost, whom Jesus Christ on the cross had given me, when he said: Woman, behold thy son!"

But why did the immaculate Virgin, after having ordered Bernadette to drink and wash herself at the fountain, also enjoin upon her to eat, daily, of the herbs growing at its edge? The reason will be readily suggested by a little reflection.

As water is the symbol of grace, so herbs, in their most evident meaning, are the symbol of abstinence, of temperance, of penance, of christian mortification. To live on herbs and roots is to lead a life of penance and mortification.

Thus, it is not Bernadette alone, but every member of the catholic church whom the immaculate Virgin addresses, when she says: "Eat of this herb daily." That is to say, perform every day some act of abstinence, of mortification. Like Saint Paul, reduce your bodies to servitude in order that, with him, each one may say: "Our bodies are girt around with the mortification of Jesus Christ." Ye just gain new strength daily by immolating your bodies through the sacrament of penance! and ye, converted sinners, every day entrust your conversion to the safe-keeping of christian mortification!

This tender invitation of the mother of grace and mercy has been hearkened to throughout the universe; and for twenty years past the just and the sinner have hastened from every land to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes. There, the sinner again becomes the child of God, and the just is enriched with the treasures of grace and fired with apostolic zeal.

CHAPTER XVI.

Eternal foundations of christian confidence: — infinite riches of the redemption of Jesus Christ and divine excess of His love.—Superabundance of the fountain of grace which flows from His gaping side and from His wounds to redeem and save the human race.—The heart of the MAN-GOD, whence this unceasing stream of salvation issues, is always open to all men — to all sinners.

We have said that the fountain of the Grotto was the symbol and the image of the infinite source of that healing grace which is emitted from the lacerated side and the wounds of Jesus Christ. With the assistance of the light of faith, we shall see this divine fountain springing from the heart of the Word made flesh, and purifying regenerated humanity with its waters.

At the Grotto, the immaculate Virgin, addressing Bernadette, says: "The fountain is there," pointing it out to her at the same time. Here, the most holy mother of God, from her throne in heaven, tells us, tells the entire human race, showing us with her merciful hand the open sides of the heart of Jesus Christ, her son: "The divine fountain of salvation, for the redemption of the world, is there; it has its origin in this heart from which it flows. Draw near unto this fountain, drink of its waters, bathe yourselves therein, and you will be eternally endowed with divine life."

In order to obey our heavenly mother, let us approach, let us consider the abundance with which this fountain of grace and redemption flows; the power with which it frees the human race from all its stains; and the fact, that heaven is henceforth open, through Jesus Christ, to all who wish to enter its tabernacles.

David, by means of a prophetic light, had seen this fountain: he had seen Christ, and carried away by admiration and love, he had exclaimed: "With Him, there is plentiful redemption, which is divinely superabundant! *Copiosa apud Eum redemptio!*"

And why is the redemption we owe to Jesus Christ divinely superabundant? Because it is infinitely greater than the sins of the human race. We are about to say how it is greater, and to reveal, at the same time, the divine excesses of the love of Jesus Christ. We cannot devote our thoughts to a more entrancing truth: this truth will occasion eternally, in heaven, ineffable ecstasy of gratitude and love.

The theological reason is evident, why the redemption, which we owe to Jesus Christ, should be infinitely in excess of the sins of the human race.

Sin, by which man has deserved the eternal fires of hell, is infinite in one sense only, in that it offends an infinite majesty, the majesty of God, which suffices to subject the transgression to an infinite chastisement, which, as it cannot be of infinite intensity, must be of infinite duration. Neither man, however, nor man's actions are infinite.

In Jesus Christ, redeeming man from hell, the infi-

nite shines forth under a threefold aspect: first, the person, in Him, is the Incarnate Word: it is the person of a God; the dignity of that person is infinite; secondly, an act emanating from a divine person, is of itself of infinite value: the divine person communicates its own dignity to its action; in the third place, what Jesus Christ redeeming the world offers at the price of its redemption is Himself, and Himself nailed to and immolated upon the cross. A God is required for the redemption of man. The dignity and the worth of the victim are therefore infinite.

Thus, in man, sin being infinite in one respect only, in the sense that it outrages an infinite majesty, and redemption through Jesus Christ being infinite in a threefold point of view: that of the dignity of the person, of the value of His actions, and of the worth of the victim offered up to redeem man, it follows that one single action of Jesus Christ, referring to the redemption and salvation of the human race, not only covers all that may be rigorously required by divine justice, but goes even infinitely beyond any limits that might be assigned. The offense, coming from man, and having to deal with God, is not a matter in which both parties are equal; man is infinitely beneath God, from whom he is separated by the infinite. But in Jesus Christ, the course of redemption lies, on the contrary, between equal parties: for Jesus Christ is God of God, in all things equal to His Father, and infinite like His Father. Therefore, by one single act of reparation, He superabundantly redeems humanity, according to the beautiful expression of the

prophet king: *Copiosa apud Eum redemptio!* It is Himself, it is His own body, His own person immolated upon the cross, that He offers to His Father for the redemption of the human race. What He gives is therefore infinitely greater than that which He redeems: He gives a God, and redeems only a creature.

Thus Saint Augustin says: "It was a dispensation, not a compensation: *Dispensatio fuit, compensatio non fuit.*"

But it was not by one single act alone that Jesus Christ wished to redeem the world. One single act was sufficient for justice, whose requirements it even infinitely surpassed. One act however was not sufficient for His love, which was too excessive to be confined within such narrow bounds. He wished to show the world how the heart of a God can love; He desired that the ardor of His own love should throw the human race, redeemed by Him, into an everlasting ecstasy. His love, as Saint Paul declares, is excessive: *Propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos.* (1) This divine excess of love begins at the very instant of His incarnation, and is to endure during thirty-three successive years! From His earliest heart-beat, from the moment He comes into this world, He says to His Father:— "*Ecce venio:* Behold, I come." (2) I offer myself to you, entirely, as a victim and for the liberation of the human race.

From the very first moment of His life, He gazes at the cross through which He is to redeem us: He lays it over His heart and utters the following language, which He is to repeat to His disciples later: "And I

have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (3)

Thus, from the very earliest pulsations of His heart, He is drawn by the infinite attractions of love towards the cross, towards Calvary. As this is the purpose of His incarnation, as He has become man only in order that He may die upon the cross for the salvation of the human race, so is He unceasingly carried away by the thought of the altar upon which His sacrifice is to be consummated. Every pulsation of His heart renews in Him the desire of dying upon the cross for the redemption of the world.

Sin having a doubly malicious character, due to the pride of rebellion which, by disobedience, elevates itself above the infinite majesty of God, and to the sacrilegious preference of carnal pleasures to the fulfillment of the divine will, Jesus Christ, from the first instant of His incarnation to His last sigh upon the cross, makes reparation for this two-fold outrage committed by sin against the divine majesty. As a reparation for pride, He offers exceedingly great humiliations to God, His Father; as a reparation for criminal carnal pleasures, He presents His Father with His own priceless sufferings. His humiliations and His sufferings being those of a God, are, on this very account, of infinite dignity and value. Thus, by each of these humiliations, by each of these sufferings, the glory He gives to God is infinitely greater than that which sin, with its two-fold malicious character, tried to sweep away.

(1) St. Paul, Ephs, ii, 4. (2) Hebr, x. 7. (3) Luke, xii. 50.

Fired with the desire of carrying the glory of His Father to the most inaccessible heights, and of thus showing how infinite is His love for men, from the very outset of His career, until His last sigh, He unceasingly offers humiliations and sufferings to His Father. The more He annihilates Himself, the more does He exalt the infinite majesty of God outraged by the revolt of sin; the more sufferings His body undergoes, the more does He glorify the infinite majesty of God outraged by sins of the flesh. And as His thirst for glorifying His Father, for repairing the outrages committed by sin is infinite, so also is His thirst for humiliations and sufferings excessive. From the moment He begins to exist, from the instant of His incarnation, He is annihilated and He suffers; from the very first moment of His life as GOD-MAN, He suffers, because He cannot, as yet, be nailed to that cross which He looks forward to so eagerly; because he cannot, as yet, undergo the torments and the humiliations of His pas sion; and because thirty-three years must elapse before He can embrace that cross, upon whose outstretched arms He is to die of happiness, saying: "All is consummated! God is glorified—the human race is saved! *Consummatum est!*"

As many times as in this life beats the heart of Jesus Christ, offering itself to God His Father, as a victim for the world, so many times was the world redeemed and saved. As many times as Jesus Christ consented to the humiliation of His divinity and divinely suffered in compliance with the will of His Father, so many times was the world redeemed and saved!

Let the christian draw near to the breast of Jesus Christ; let him listen and count all the pulsations of His heart, and let him say to himself: "So many times has He redeemed and saved me!" Let us now follow Jesus Christ from the first to the last moment of His existence; let us study His interior and exterior actions; His incessant adorations, His thanksgivings, the praises and the supplications which He addressed to His Father, the perpetual offering He makes of Himself for the salvation of the world, and the infinite love with which He never ceased to love that world, as well as His prayers and His petitions for the salvation of men. Besides these interior actions, let us examine those of His external existence: the humiliations and the sufferings of His hidden life crowned by the humiliations and the sufferings of His public career, and the actions of His public life crowned by His passion.

Never has Jesus Christ caused His love for His Father and for men to show itself in a brighter light. Never has He, either, elevated to a higher degree the glory of His Father. He knows, that the more He will annihilate Himself and suffer in the sight of that Father, the more His holy name and most holy majesty will be exalted. Therefore He annihilates Himself and suffers to a measureless extent; He avails Himself of His power as God to descend into abysses of annihilation and suffering; into which no man on earth can descend. To allay the infinite thirst of His heart, insults and torments fall to His lot. And what insults! Struck with blows, spat upon in the face, dressed as a fool, derisive purple thrown upon

His shoulders: *Ecce Homo*, condemned as a criminal, and crucified between two thieves! What sufferings! The bloody sweat in the garden; the flagellation at the pillar; His bones exposed to sight, so that, in the language of the royal prophet, their number has been counted; the crown of thorns penetrating into His head; His tunic glued to His mangled flesh and bones; His entire body transformed into one wound; and notwithstanding the amount of laceration, Christ carrying His cross with infinite love, falling to the ground three times, beneath the weight of the sins of the human race, in order to point out to us the gravity of sin, through that triple fall; rising again, however, and pressing the cross to His heart, so as to show us the power and the unutterable excess of His love. On Calvary, His heart stands more than ever revealed: supreme excess of His love; supreme annihilation, and most extreme torture! His tunic dyed with His blood, and agglutinated to His flesh is violently torn off; His hands and feet bound and nailed to the cross; this cross raised and driven into position in the ground with such brutal violence, that the wounds of the hands and feet are enlarged, the thorns of the crown driven deeper into the head; the terrible thirst consuming His entrails; for during the passion, He is given neither a drop of water nor a mouthful of bread; they made Him live on torments and insults: the only refreshment offered to His parched lips being gall and vinegar; finally, the divine agony of three hours duration! . . . . . .

The church, at the sight of Jesus Christ upon the cross, at the sight of this infinite redemption, is seized with holy enthusiasm; she is thrilled, and becomes ecstatic in presence of the wounded side of Jesus Christ, and in her ecstasy she utters the triumphal cry, which reaches from earth to heaven, to all people, to all time:

UNDA MANAT ET CRUOR,
TERRA, PONTUS, ASTRA, MUNDUS
QUO LAVANTUR FLUMINE!

. . . . . a flood
Streams forth, of water mixed with blood;
With what a tide are washed again
The sinful earth, the stars, the main!

See, says she, with what impetuosity and with what abundance this stream of life pours from the wounded side of the Saviour! The first deluge had inundated the earth only; the second, which proceeds from the gaping side of Jesus Christ, from the wound of His heart, inundates not only the earth, but, along with the earth, the heavens, the oceans, the suns, the worlds, the immensity of space, overflowing them all with its repairing floods!

They are now disclosed to us, the everlasting foundations of christian confidence, that is to say, th einfinite riches of the redemption by Jesus Christ, and the divine, the incomprehensible excesses of His love!

Jesus Christ being what He is, the Incarnate Word, the GOD-MAN, one single action of His was sufficient for the redemption and the salvation of the human race. And we enjoy, we possess that rich and incalculable series of acts of reparation performed during His

career as God-man, and during His divine Passion.—For our redemption and our salvation, the tribunal of the infinite justice of God required not more than one drop of the divine stream flowing from the heart of the God-man; still this stream has rolled the entire volume of its waters over us! A single drop of His blood was sufficient to satisfy the rigors of justice in the redemption of the human race, and was even infinitely more than what was required; but the excessive love of our most adorable Saviour, Jesus Christ, did not allow of His retaining a single drop in His veins and in His heart. This beautiful, this divine blood, He shed it entirely upon the cross, over the earth, over our souls, and over the human race.

Thus, the greatness and the number of our sins are infinitely exceeded by the greatness and the treasures of the redemption by Jesus Christ!

Thus, the offering made by Jesus Christ upon the altar of the cross is superabundantly sufficient not only for the redemption of the human race, but also for untold millions of worlds, did they exist!

O Sinners! whoever you may be on earth, the immaculate Virgin now says to you, not only from the inmost recesses of her sanctuary of Lourdes, but from her throne of clemency in heaven; O sinners, whoever you may be, I intercede for you; approach with confidence this cross of Jesus Christ, my divine Son; embrace it tenderly; raise it up between heaven and yourselves, between the justice of God and your sins. Enriched with all the treasures of redemption which you owe to Jesus Christ, redeemed and saved by Him, not

once only, but millions upon millions of times, say to God, with confidence: O God! Our Father! in the name of Thy divine Son, in the name of His cross and of His heart, pardon our sins; we bewail them, we detest them, we wish to confess them, we wish to do penance for them. God will hearken to this cry issuing from the heart; and the priest, the minister of His infinite mercies, will pronounce over you, at the tribunal of penance, a sentence of pardon. From having been enemies of God and slaves of the devil, you will once more become the children of God, the friends and the brethren of Jesus Christ—the heirs of His kingdom—and you will reign with Him forever.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Immaculate Virgin has expressed to us all what she said to Bernadette: WE MUST PRAY FOR SINNERS. *Then, addressing herself to sinners, she added:—* PENANCE, PENANCE, PENANCE!—*How we are to pray for the conversion of sinners, and how important it is for sinners to heed the most Blessed Virgin's invitation.*

An infinite sadness had overcast the countenance of the immaculate Virgin before saying to Bernadette:—"We must pray for Sinners." And why this unutterable impress of sorrow upon that countenance wherein is usually depicted the happiness of heaven?—It is because, at this moment, the divine Virgin was considering, in the light of eternal truth, the state of poor sinners; she saw what the sinner loses if he be not converted, and the terrible punishments to which he condemns himself: what he loses is heaven, if he persevere and die in sin; that to which he condemns himself, and which he merits, is hell. At this sight, an infinite commiseration seizes upon the heart of the immaculate Virgin, and she cries out to us all: "We must pray for Sinners; heaven must be opened, and hell closed to them."

It is by meditating upon this thought of heaven lost forever, and an eternity of hell incurred by sinners, who die impenitent, that the saints have felt enkindled in

their bosoms the flame of apostolic zeal, The divine passion for the salvation of souls has seized them, and they have wrought prodigies.

Following the example of the saints, let us consider the infinite losses made by the impenitent sinner, and that eternal hell to which he condemns himself, and we will feel enkindled in our hearts some few sparks of that apostolic flame which, for the saints, resulted in a conflagration. Then, we will pray for sinners, and our prayers will be couched in those accents which go straight to the heart of God, which propitiate Him, which disarm the thunderbolts of His wrath, and placing in His hands only the weapons of clemency and mercy. We will be apostles in so far as our station in life will allow. Not limiting ourselves to prayers, we will labor, we will influence sinners according to the measure of our strength and our freedom. Transforming the most unfortunate creatures on earth into happy beings; rescuing poor sinners from the greatest of all dangers, that of losing their souls; smoothing the way and opening wide for them the gates of heaven, such is the result of the prayers which the immaculate Virgin requests of us in their behalf.

As to sinners to whom that divine mother, deeply compassionating their condition, cries out: "Penance, penance, penance!" it is impossible that they should reflect upon this two-fold effect of death in sin: heaven lost—hell incurred: and not yield to this cry of maternal love which seeks their salvation. Enlightened by the lights of reason and faith, where is the sinner who can consider the loss of heaven and the torments of

hell, without feeling sentiments of pity aroused in his own regard?

The loss of heaven is an infinite loss; it is greater than that of all the kingdoms of earth, even were the sinner to remain sovereign thereof until the end of the world; Jesus Christ, the living truth affirms it, when he tells us: "... what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? *Quid enim prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur?*" (1)

Yes, take the entire world, extract from it all the glory, all the possessions, all the pleasures it affords during the whole time it is to last; give these to a man, let him enjoy them until the last day; when he will thus have tasted this happiness, what will the enjoyment avail him, if he afterwards lose his soul for all eternity?

Eternal loss of heaven, infinite loss! When later, the sinner reflects upon this place of torture which will be his habitation if he die in sin; when he hears from the lips of all the inmates of that frightful abode, the words: "*Crucior in hac flamma:* I am tormented in these flames," (2) it is impossible that he should not be seized with fear and trembling at the light of divine justice. No, he will be unable to make up his mind to be forever in that place of untold agony, to be tortured by that fire, to live in that society which will bear eternally the weight of the curse of God. No, no, my God, I cannot consent to accept this ever-

(1) Matth. xvi, 26.

(2) Luke, xvi, 24.

lasting malediction. I neither wish to be accursed by Thee, nor to curse Thee myself. I wish to serve and to love Thee! However great a sinner I may be, Thou art still my God and my Father. I come to Thee protected by the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, and the all-powerful intercession of the immaculate Virgin, His divine mother. I will say, with the prodigal son :— "*Peccavi:* I have sinned," and Thou wilt take pity upon me, and I shall again become Your child!

I will, therefore, be entering into the designs of the most holy Virgin, and corresponding with the dearest wish of her heart, to place here, before the eyes of the just and of sinners, the representation of the loss of heaven, and that of hell incurred through final impenitence, since it is at this school that the just learn to pray, and sinners to be converted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HEAVEN!

Infinite happiness which will be the lot of the sinner, if he become converted and die in a state of grace.—Infinite loss sustained by the sinner, if he persevere in sin and die impenitent.

Heaven is the undimmed vision of God, and the full possession of God during eternity.

God, who, by His nature, is invisible, on account of the infinity of His being and of His perfections, makes Himself visible to the souls in heaven who contemplate Him face to face, and as He really is. In order that they may see Him, who is invisible by His nature, He imparts to them a ray of that divine light by which He sees Himself; this light is His Word. Thus it is the Word of God, God of God, and Light of Light which will illuminate souls and render them capable of perceiving the divine essence itself. Souls will have the intuition of God; for this reason heaven is styled the place of intuitive vision. Being immersed in the divine essence they will be enabled to penetrate at the same time all the laws and wonders of creation. With one single glance, because that glance is a participation of the Light of the Word, they will embrace everything, God, His perfections, His works; the world of grace, the world of glory! By participation in this light of

the Word, intellects will be rendered eternally beautiful and divine. Seeing God face to face, constitutes the first degree of the happiness of heaven; loving God, possessing God, through a sovereign and eternal union, such is the plenitude of the happiness of heaven. How sublime the manner of this union: God, infinite and living light, infinite and living goodness, infinite and living holiness, infinite and living felicity, will be in the centre of souls, communicating Himself to them, penetrating them, transforming them into Himself, uniting them to Himself by an ineffable bond, making them share in His light, His goodness, His felicity, in a word, making them partake of His own nature, according to the expression of the apostle Saint Peter: *Divinæ Consortes naturæ.* By this participation in the divine nature, such souls are deified, they are wholly in God, and God is wholly in them. Thus does God fulfill His promise: "I am ..... thy reward exceeding great: *Ego .... merces tua magna nimis.*" (1)

Until the day of the last judgment this participation in the divine nature, this entire possession of God will be concentrated in the soul alone. But as soon as the body, at the sound of the trumpet, starting up from the tomb will be united to the soul, of a sudden all that the soul possesses of light, of beauty, of holiness, and of felicity, will be shared with the body, which will therefore be resplendent with the light of God, beautiful with the beauty of God, holy with the holiness of God, and happy with the happiness of God! The heart which had fallen to dust in the tomb, along with the

(1) Gen., xv. 7.

rest of the body, feeling itself all at once in possession of God, who is the infinite treasure, the source and the aggregation of all treasures, the infinite beauty, the infinite felicity, the infinite charity, the infinite love, will then have its pulsations restored anew, pulsations which are produced by the possession and the enjoyment of an infinite happiness! In one of these pulsations alone, there will be inexpressibly millions of times more happiness experienced than that which might be procured by every possible human felicity; for it is the happiness of God, which reacts upon the heart, and as that happiness is infinite, it produces in the heart an infinite transport of joy. And each of these heart pulsations with its attendant infinite transport of joy, is destined to be forever repeated—to be eternal!

Heaven, where souls enjoy the clear vision and the possession of God, is the kingdom of holiness. Sanctity is beheld in God, in the most Holy Trinity, which by its very essence is infinite sanctity, and in which infinite sanctity manifests itself with infinite splendor. It is beheld in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, true Son of the living God, God of God, Light of Light, holy with all the holiness of God; for infinite sanctity manifests itself in Jesus Christ with infinite splendor. It is beheld in the immaculate Virgin, the most holy mother of God, the living mirror which reflects the infinite sanctity of God and of the Incarnate Word. It is beheld in the persons of all the inhabitants of this kingdom, both the angels who remained faithful, and the just who died in the grace of Jesus Christ. All the members of that countless society participating in the

divine nature, will thereby participate in the infinite sanctity of God. On the other hand, this society forming the mystic body of Jesus Christ, will share in the infinite sanctity of its Leader. Thus, each celestial spirit, every just person will be transformed into the thrice holy God and will be, as it were, identified with Christ, Himself thrice holy. The sanctity of God and of Christ will be the sanctity of all the inhabitants of heaven. This sanctity will take perpetual root in them; it will bud in them, producing a flower whose perfume will permeate throughout paradise. This sanctity will be resplendent in all: from the centre of the soul it will be entirely diffused; it will be translucent on the foreheads and countenances of the elect. As we will see God, face to face, and as He really is, we will also see Him wherever He is. And as He is in the centre of the soul, in the heart, in the very vitals of each inhabitant of heaven, we will be able to see neither angel nor saint, without at the same time seeing God in that angel or in that saint; God thrice holy resplendent in that angel or in that saint, interiorly and exteriorly, with the infinite splendor of His sanctity.

In this kingdom of holiness, in this society, whose members are incomparably more numerous than the stars of the firmament, not a single stain can be discerned. Sanctity is resplendent everywhere, and not only all are saints, but they will be so eternally. God dwelling in each one, as in His living temple, as long as God will be God, the temple which He has chosen for Himself will be holy. They have therefore taken root, they are established, grounded and confirmed in

sanctity. What a delight to be able to say to one's self: "I am impeccable for all eternity!" On earth it was necessary to work out one's salvation with fear and trembling; in heaven love possesses its object; it no longer fears, and trembles no more!

This universal character of sanctity reveals beforehand what must be the social relations of the inhabitants of the city of God. No matter how innumerable they may be, they are all nevertheless acquainted with each other, and enjoy an intimacy which infinitely surpasses all the intimacies of earth.

As we have said, God communicates to them the light, with which He sees Himself. This light is His Word. Having their intellectual vision fortified by this divine light, the inhabitants of heaven comprehend all at a glance, God, His perfections and His works. Illuminated by the Word of God, they see every thing without effort, without fatigue, and in the clearest light possible. Thus they know distinctly and fully all the celestial spirits and all the saints in paradise. We will add, that this knowledge is a necessary consequence of the divine plan. God, who is in them, wishes to be glorified by all for what He has done for each one of them, and by all for what each one of them has done for Him. It is therefore necessary that all He has done for them, and what they have done for Him, should be manifested in the most brilliant light, and should be thoroughly revealed.

Here below, we can only be imperfectly acquainted with the lives of the saints; in heaven we will understand them in their most minute details. We will be-

hold all the saints, such as the grace of God and their actions will have made them. The deeds of God, through His saints, and the deeds of the saints through grace, and with the grace of God, will be presented to our contemplation in an infinite light. Each life will offer a succession of those actions in which both God and man will have taken part, and which are therefore of infinite value, and deserving of eternal life. Each life will be unfolded in our presence, like some divine poem, whose plot will be the lucid vision of God, and the entire possession of God during eternity! Through this intimate and complete knowledge of all the lives of the saints, we will feel ourselves invincibly attracted to praise God for all that He has done for the saints, and for all that the saints have done for Him.

Thus, to see all at a single glance, to know all thoroughly and intimately, to bless God in the name of all and for all, such will be the eternal privilege and the eternal delight of the society formed by the saints. As to the love by which they are united, it is unutterable! God, who is infinite love, will be in all; He will therefore be the bond of union for all, and all will be only one in Him! Each one will be able to say: "In this countless society there is not a single heart which does not love me, and whose love for me is not of the highest, the most tender, the most holy order; for the love with which it loves me is derived from God." All will rejoice at the happiness of each one, with whom, they will love God, who is in each one, and who loves each one. Their hearts will be in unison in making to God a return of love for love. O family of God! how greatly

wilt thou be loved, and how loving wilt thou be! How great the divine attraction between hearts! On earth the friends of God were either laboring, or combating, or harvesting; it was only by stealth and for a little while that they could enjoy the happiness of being together; but in heaven, in the abode of God Himself, in the peace of victory, they will enjoy, without limitation or ending, the felicity of loving each other and of being together.

Respect will be equal to love. God, who is infinite sanctity, infinite majesty, will be in all the inhabitants of heaven. The angels and the saints will be His living temples and His living tabernacles. Thus, the respect due to the infinite holiness, to the infinite majesty of God which shines forth in His living temples, will be also the respect with which all the inhabitants of the heavenly country will be imbued, one towards the other.

On earth, holiness and the merits of the servants of God remained concealed in their souls; God, who dwelt within their souls was concealed also. But in heaven, God reveals Himself; the holiness and the merits of each inhabitant will shine forth and will be fully known. Besides seeing God in each saint, we will also behold his personal sanctity, all his merits; in a word, all that he will have done for God. As the temple of God, we will already look upon him with infinite respect, and this respect will be still more and more excited by the contemplation of his merits! Oh, how much greater will respect be in heaven, than it is on earth!

This universal respect will proceed from God Himself, of whom it is written: "Thou dost with great favor dispose of us: *Et cum magna reverentia disponis nos.*" (1) And there is nothing astonishing in this; for, from the moment that He has elevated us to the dignity of children of God, that He has caused us to participate in His nature, it is Himself whom He respects in us. Let us then imagine the respect with which one will be seized in presence of this countless host of celestial spirits and saints, in each one of whom God will dwell, as in His temple!

O blessed kingdom, in which love and respect will keep equal pace eternally!

Not only will heaven be a society of saints, but it will also be a society of conquerors. Amongst His titles, God is pleased to be known as the Lord God of Hosts. Christ, the Incarnate Word, is the leader of these Hosts. He has conquered with the cross, giving to all the grace of conquering; to His mother, in the first place, then to the angels, and finally to men. The first victory, after that won by Christ, was to be the triumph obtained by the Virgin, His divine mother.—From the instant of her immaculate conception, her heel crushes the head of the serpent, of the infernal dragon. The entire army of heavenly hosts have fought a great battle. Saint Michael was their leader; and Lucifer and his angels were in the opposing ranks. Saint Michael sounds the cry: "Who is like unto God: *Quis ut Deus?*" And at this cry, immeasurably more terrible than lightning, Lucifer and his supporters are

(1) Wisdom, xii. 18.

hurled into hell, and their places in heaven are vacated. The church of Jesus Christ was the next to combat, and its combat is to last as long as the world: the apostles, the martyrs, the saints conquer unceasingly: how splendid their victories are! And, with varying degrees, all the inhabitants of heaven will have illustrated the cause of Christ, all will have conquered, all will have triumphed over themselves, over the world, over sin, over Satan, and over hell. Thus, all will bear palms in their hands.

In children, called to heaven after baptism and before attaining the age of reason, the grace of Jesus Christ without their co-operation will have conquered. It will have destroyed in their souls, without any action on their part, the dominion of the devil and of sin; it will have given them the character and the title of children of God. Thus, each one of them will be victorious over Satan, over sin, and over hell. Each one of them will carry a palm in its hand!

The felicity of all the inhabitants of heaven will be infinite, for this felicity is God Himself, seen as He is, loved and possessed forever!

They do not contemplate a veiled radiation, a reflection, or a luminous shadow of the Divinity, as do the saints when in ecstasy upon earth; they behold the Divinity Itself, in all its splendor, in all its adorable perfections, in its infinite beauty. The veil of faith has dropped forever; it is the vision unobscured, the vision direct; it is intuition. And this bliss causes them to be ravished to such a degree that, in comparison, all the ecstasies of the saints upon earth are as but a drop of

water to the ocean. It is necessary that God should imbue them with His own strength, in order to enable them to support the intensity of such great ecstasy.

They possess God, who thus enraptures them, in the most intimate recesses of their being, and in possessing Him, they enjoy Him who is the infinite good, the infinite happiness. This enjoyment of God possessed within one's self is so elevated, so divine, and so deifying, that every enjoyment which human intellect can conceive is nothing in comparison, and is unworthy of being made the subject of a parallel. All the faculties of the soul quench their thirst at the very fountain of living waters. The body, which formerly was earthly, is now spiritualized; it experiences the divine ebbing of the delights of the soul. The flesh, formerly earthly also, is henceforward rendered angelic, according to the expression of Tertullian: *Angelificata caro.* (1) It enjoys after the manner of angels; it is granted the privilege of sharing in the ecstasies and the delights of the soul! This flesh, in contact with God, through the medium of the soul, and henceforth the temple of the Holy Spirit, will be penetrated throughout with infinite sanctity, whose unutterable splendor it will forever reflect.

Thus, whithersoever the gaze be directed in this city of God, no where is any thing but infinite happiness to be seen. Let us now consider the worship which obtains among the inhabitants of heaven.

Contemplating God, as He is, entranced and enraptured they are prostrate before such infinite grandeur,

(1) De Resurrect carnis

which they adore, praise, bless and exalt. Adoration, praise, benediction, the *Magnificat* or glorification of God, the *Exultavit* or lively emotion in God, and hymns to His glory become the life, and, as it were, the vital breath of all the heavenly spirits and of all the saints; these tributes of adoration and praise are the incense, whose perfume constantly ascends towards God. O immortal king of ages, O thrice holy God, to Thee alone be honor, praise and glory! We adore Thee in our name, and in that of all the inferior creatures whom Thou hast drawn from nothing for us; in that of those suns and of those worlds scattered throughout the immensity of space! Thou hast converted them into our foot-stool, and the vestibule of Thy paradise! Let heaven on high, let the inferior suns and worlds forever echo the adorations and the praises we render unto Thee!

All the saints in heaven feel unbounded gratitude enkindled in their inmost hearts for being in possession of God, united to Him for eternity, and having become His children through Christ, the Incarnate Word, they realize that they have been redeemed and saved by Him, and that now they are to reign forever with Him in glory. The heavenly spirits, conquering through the grace of Jesus Christ, but remaining subjects, experience this same gratitude to an inexpressible degree, so that an incessant and universal chant of thanksgiving is sent forth by the heavenly spirits and by the saints. All would wish to render the expression of gratitude proportionate to the greatness of the blessings received; but being un-

able, of themselves, they have recourse to Jesus Christ, the God-man, their Saviour, their mediator.

O God, thrice holy, for Thy unutterable favors; for the boon of Thy divine Son, sent by Thee for the redemption of the world, which He was to effect; for His cross; for His graces which have opened for us the gates of heaven; for that ineffable enjoyment of Thy essence; for that participation in Thy nature; for that eternal possession of Thy entire self; for that union with Christ, whose living members we are become forever; for that infinite glory; that infinite bliss, which is the result, for us, of our union with Thee and with Christ, we will never be able to offer Thee a thanksgiving worthy of Thyself. But we present Thee with Thy Son, Jesus Christ, the object of Thy eternal complacency; Jesus Christ, God of God, equal to Thee in all things, our mediator and our brother. We inscribe Him upon our escutcheons, we tender Him to Thee; it is through Him, through His heart, that we express to Thee our gratitude for Thy infinite mercies! We offer Him to Thee as the eternal interpreter of our gratitude! But love is the feature which rises dominant in the worship of the inhabitants of heaven, and it is love also which forms the highest element of that worship.

God is infinite charity: *Deus Charitas est;* (1) He is the living and infinite furnace whence the flame of love is communicated to the heavenly court. The celestial spirits and the saints are fired by this flame, each one according to the measure of his merits. All the love with which they are endowed, will be directed eternally

(1) 1. John, iv 8.

towards God and towards Jesus Christ. The infinite charity of God will be revealed to them without concealment; they will appreciate its breadth and its length, its height and its depth. (1) They will realize the truth of the language: "God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten son." (2) This only begotten son, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world will be before them. The charity which consumed His divine heart will be revealed, and contemplated in all the ardor of its glow. This divine heart, this heart of the God-man will appear to us as it is. We shall witness the immense flames of love which consume it. All the love He bore His Father, by whom He was sent, and all the love He bore us, whom He came to save, will be manifested to us in a dazzling light.

This exceeding divine charity, as Saint Paul calls it: "*Propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos*," (3) will be revealed to us in all its plenitude. Every theandric action in the life of the God-man, from the incarnation unto the cross, will be revealed upon His adorable countenance. In a word, the divine heart of Jesus, with all its pulsations, its ardors, its affections, and its actions for the glory of His Father and for the salvation of the world, will be like a book whose pages will be forever open to our scrutiny.

What Saint Paul, the seraphic Paul, experienced in presence of that infinite charity of God the Father giving us His Son, and in presence of that exceeding

(1) Ephes., iii. 18.
(2) John, iii. 16.
(3) Eph. ii. 4.

divine love of the Son immolating Himself for us, all the inhabitants of heaven will experience also, and with still greater intensity, as they will be face to face with God, and with Jesus Christ: *Charitas Christi urget nos.* (1) All the court of heaven will feel the embrace of this infinite charity of God and of Christ; and will desire to return love for love. And as both the heavenly spirits and the saints are fired with love, each one in the measure of his merits, by an eternal impulse, they will be drawn towards that God who is infinite charity, and towards Christ who is infinite charity also, and they will love with all the power of their being.

Being unable however to love as they desire, because the love within them is limited, they have recourse to Christ, their mediator, who is God and man, and who, as God, possesses in His heart a priceless love.

"O God! worthy of an infinite love," they all exclaim together, "we unite the limited love of our hearts to the immense love of the heart of Jesus, our mediator and our Saviour, and it is through His heart, in His heart and with His heart, that we love Thee. Each one of us offers Thee, as a perpetual oblation, the infinitely precious love of His heart!

"And Thou, O Christ, who hast so loved us, and who art worthy of an infinite love, it is through Thy heart, again, in Thy heart and with Thy heart that we love Thee! And it is by offering Thee the exceeding divine love of Thy own heart, that we will forever give Thee back love for love!"

(1) II, Cor., v., 14.

Mary, the mother of the Word, and our mother also, will be our mediatrix with her Son, Jesus Christ, the mediator. She sits at His right hand in heaven. She will appear to us in all her glory, in all her holiness, in all her sovereign union with God, and in all the splendor communicated to her by God. We will behold the soul of the most Blessed Virgin, and in the centre of her soul we will contemplate God, penetrating it with His divinity, and causing His divinity to shine forth in it with greater lustre than in all the celestial spirits and in all the saints of heaven. We will appreciate all that God has done for her and all that she has done for God; all that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, her Son, the Saviour of the world, has done for her, and all that she has done for Jesus Christ. We will realize all that she has done for the church of Jesus Christ, and for each one of us in particular.

After the Incarnate Word, she will be the most sublime master-piece of all God's works. And God wills that she shall be seated at the right hand of her Son during all eternity. The glory with which she will be crowned, will be greater than that of all the inhabitants of heaven taken together. The holiness which, from her soul, will shine forth over her entire person, will far surpass the united holiness of the whole celestial court. The love with which she will love God and Jesus Christ, will be infinitely above all that the heavenly spirits and the saints may ever experience.

Our respect for her will be proportioned to her ineffable dignity as mother of God, and to her title as queen of heaven and sovereign of the world; but, at the same

time, we will feel for her a degree of filial love in keeping with the maternal love she has evinced for the entire church and for each one of ourselves.

As she will be our common mother, and as every thing belonging to her will be ours, we will be able to dispose of all the treasures of holiness and love of her maternal heart, and offer them to Jesus Christ her divine Son.

No! Saviour of the world, our hearts do not afford love enough to allow us to make a proper response to Thy exceeding divine love for us. At Thy side, however, we have Thy mother, who is our mother also, and we desire to love Thee with all the love with which she loves Thee herself. Her heart is a holy inheritance left to us; it is also our precious offering. We will never cease presenting and offering it to Thee. In the heart of the immaculate Virgin, through that heart, and with that heart we will return her love for love. And throughout eternity, O Christ! O God! O Saviour! we will concentrate in Thy divine heart, all the treasures of love, all the fires of love which consume the heart of Thy divine mother!

The crowning element in the happiness of the inhabitants of heaven is the eternity of that happiness. The unclouded vision of God; the entire possession of God; the sovereign and divine union with Jesus Christ; the living incorporation of the mystical members of Jesus Christ, with their Leader; the contemplation of the glory of the immaculate Virgin and the feeling by which we experience her motherly love for us; the torrent of life, of happiness, of divine love, flowing from

the bosom of God and the heart of Jesus Christ over our souls, and from their centre returning to the divine fountain head from which it sprang; the bond of charity which causes all the inhabitants of heaven to be one, in heart and in soul; the peace, the glory, the transports of love, the praises, the adorations ascending from all hearts towards God and towards Christ; the entirely divine life, in a word, is to last as long as God Himself! And the certainty, forever present throughout eternity, that our happiness is to be without end, will cause the enjoyment to be increased a hundred fold.

Thus, when millions and millions of ages will have glided by, when we will have noted the lapse of as many centuries as there are grains of dust on the globe, or molecules of air throughout space, or grains of sand on earth, or drops of water in rivers, seas, and the ocean; when we will have noted the lapse of as many centuries as there are leaves on the trees, blades of grass, and drops of dew, the happiness of the saints will still be at its origin, and at its very beginning, for the whole of eternity is before them. Let them pass through as many centuries more, and eternity, entire, will still be before them.

Beautiful heaven, eternal home of the saints, Thou must be mine at any price! My God, I resolve to serve Thee in this world; I resolve, cost what it may, to possess Thee forever! I resolve to form part of that blessed society which contemplates and loves Thee! O my Saviour Jesus Christ, who hast redeemed me through such exceeding prodigies of love, I resolve,

even in this world, to give Thee back love for love. I resolve, no matter how difficult it may be, to follow Thee; I resolve to glorify Thee upon earth; I resolve to love Thee, forever, in heaven.

And thou, O immaculate Virgin, mother of my adorable Saviour, protect the resolution I make of belonging to Him henceforward; chain me to His service; teach me love Him, to glorify Him; lead me by the hand through the thickest of the fight; bend over me at my last hour—receive my last sigh! and do thou, thyself, present my soul to thy divine Son!

CHAPTER XIX.

ETERNITY!

What Eternity will be for Sinners who die in sin and impenitent—in a state of revolt and warfare against God—against Christ—and against His church.

The immaculate Virgin, the most holy mother of God, with a feeling of infinite commiseration, cries out to all sinners: *Penance! penance! penance!* At the same time she intercedes for them and prays for their conversion. They can all, then, become converted and saved if they will. The infinite mercies of God await them. Jesus Christ covers them with the shadow of His cross and offers them pardon. The church, true mother that she is, opens her arms to them, and is ready to absolve them at the tribunal of penance; and God Himself, from the heights of His glory, points out heaven to them as a reward: "Behold your kingdom if you return to Me!"

Surely, these are sufficient motives to induce them to become converted and to say with the prodigal son: "I will arise, and I will go to my Father: *Surgam et ibo ad Patrem!*"

But should they still hesitate to arise, to speak the word, to return to God, let them reflect upon the eternal chastisement which awaits them; let them dwell

upon that eternal hell which will be their lot if they die in sin, and then they will hesitate no longer. In presence of an eternal hell viewed with the lights of reason and faith, what man can resist! ..... Rather than see himself hurled into the abyss, he will burst all his fetters, no matter how powerfully binding.

It is, therefore, in the dearest interest of sinners and as a crowning attempt at achieving their conversion, that we place before their eyes the faithful representation of the torments of hell. We will merely quote from the gospel and from the words of Jesus Christ.

Not only does the sinner who perseveres and dies in sin lose heaven, but, to put a climax to his misfortune, he condemns himself to hell. What is hell? Let us turn to the gospel, the book of eternal truth, and listen.

At the last day, when Jesus Christ will have judged the living and the dead, He will thus pronounce sentence against the dead: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels: *Discedite a me, maledicti in ignem æternum qui paratus est diabolo et angelis ejus.*" (1) Thus, the curse of God and everlasting fire are to be the lot of all sinners who die in their sins. The Saviour of the world tells us in the parable of the bad rich man: "..... the rich man also died: and he was buried in hell: *Mortuus est autem et dives et sepultus est in inferno.*" (2) Buried in hell, what a tomb! Jesus Christ reveals to us the torture to which this bad rich man is subjected by permitting us to hear him exclaim:—

(1) Matth. xxv. 41.

(2) Luke, xvi. 22.

"... I am tormented in these flames: *Crucior in hac flamma.*" (1)

Thus, for each damned soul every thing will be an undying *Crucior!* I am tormented in these flames!—All that earth could afford: palaces, wealth, grandeur, pleasures, all is summed up in this tomb of fire!

Jesus Christ, the eternal truth, tells us besides that the sinner who damns himself, falls into a place of torments: *in locum tormentorum.* (2) This fire, which is never to be extinguished, is not therefore the only torment of the damned. All that he sees, all that he hears, all that surrounds him, is a torment for him.

One of his tortures is to find himself condemned to live forever in the society of demons and of the damned. What a society! Whatever is most perverse in human nature is met with there! The greatest monsters the earth has borne are there! Those whose cruelty has disgraced the centuries which witnessed their excesses are there! The most frightful examples of villainy are there! Whatever was most degraded in crime or vice on earth is there! Whoever is most impious in the world, and whoever wages the most obstinate warfare against God and against Jesus Christ, will be there! Instincts, perversity, cruelty, hatred, impiety, crimes, vices, all these will be living in the persons of the damned, both men and women, and will be manifest in their countenances. Such are the beings which form the front ranks of the assemblage in hell, those with whom each one of the damned will be condemned

(1) Luke, xvi. 24.

(2) Ibid. 28.

to live forever, and whose horrible countenances will also be forever under his eyes.

But it is not merely with this execrable crowd, it is with the entire assembly of the damned that he will be condemned to live. This concourse is frightfully large in numbers, and it is composed of all those men and women who, in the world, were voluntarily slaves to sin, and who died in its bonds, and each of its members will have heard, on the day of judgment, in presence of heaven and earth, the words uttered by the Sovereign Judge: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." It is therefore an accursed multitude whose destiny is eternal fire. This curse will be inscribed on the foreheads of all; and each of these accursed wretches will be eternally tortured by fire in proportion to the number and the malice of his sins.

Humanity accursed and damned does not however, alone, constitute the society of hell; there are besides, in the foremost ranks, Satan and all the angels who were cursed with him and hurled into everlasting fire. Accursed beings, identified in some sort with evil, they breathe only hatred for God and hatred for man created in the likeness of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ and destined to fill the places they left vacant in heaven. The damned soul will also have to live forever with these execrable spirits, these eternal enemies of the human race.

Hatred is the characteristic of this entire society, of the demons as well as of the damned. Universal hatred: hatred against heaven will not cease to fulminate hatred against God, who will not desist from punish-

ing. Hatred of one's self; each damned soul, each demon, seeing that he himself was the cause of the torment he is undergoing, will hate himself unceasingly. Hatred of all the damned and of all the demons whose sight and hatred act as stimulants to the sufferings of each individual. Special and greater hatred are felt by the damned towards those who, by their doctrines, their language, or their actions, have had a share in his being lost forever. Hatred of entire creation, the sight of which and the benefits it enjoys, are no longer available to the damned, whose only connection with them is through an avenging fire. Hatred of Satan and of all his angels, by whom so many of the damned have been seduced and dragged down into the abyss. Hatred of the infernal dragon who holds them captive beneath a yoke of iron, and who, with all the demons, will take advantage of his power to torment them. In Satan and in the demons, hatred will be greater in proportion as their own loss will have been heavier, and as they will be more severely tortured by divine justice.

Thus, hatred is universal in this abode of the damned. It exists in all; it will be the torture and the eternal punishment of all. During the whole of eternity spent in hell, the damned creature will not receive, from any quarter, either a kind look, or a mark of affection, or a token of friendship, or a word of compassion, or any evidence of interest. Filial piety, brotherly tenderness, love of parents, love existing between man and wife, that which represents the family and social life, all will have forever perished so far as the damn-

ed are concerned! As each one of the damned hates himself with implacable and unextinguishable hatred, how can his heart thus possessed and consumed give expression to a single sign of interest or friendship for others? No, throughout eternity, the damned wretch will neither love nor can he love any living being, and in the whole of creation there will never be found a living being, or a heart which can love him. Being forever identified with sin and with rebellion against God, he will be the eternal object of the hatred, not only of all the inhabitants of hell, but also of all the blessed in heaven. In this city of evil and hatred, whatever strikes the eye is calculated to torture the soul. The only light in hell is a shadowy flame which illumines it entire, and which allows each one of the reprobates to see the torments of all the rest. The Sovereign Judge has willed it in order that each reprobate may understand that divine justice punishes according to the number and enormity of sins.

The tortures of particularly great sinners will be the terror of hell itself, for it is written: " . . . . the mighty shall be mightily tormented: *Potentes autem potenter tormenta patientur.*" (1) And to think that this picture of the torments of all the damned must be forever before the eyes! In their features there will remain nothing of the expression they were wont to display whilst on earth and still under the benignant sway of mercy.

In hell, on all these countenances there will be seen naught but the action of fire, the convulsive shocks of despair, the contraction and the withering blight of

[1] Wisdom, vi. 7.

hatred, so that hell will be depicted on the countenances and in the looks of all the damned!

And Jesus Christ, in the gospel, has pronounced the following words, which complete the revelations of hell: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: *Ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium.*" (1)

By the light of eternal truth, the damned realize the value of the gifts they have lost. These gifts are God, heaven, the society of the saints, and eternal happiness. And as they appreciate, at the same time, that it is owing to their own spontaneous and criminal rebellion against God that they have lost these infinite and eternal gifts, an infinite regret arises in the inmost recesses of their souls equal to the amount of the loss they have sustained: hence those tears: *Ibi erit fletus.*

On the other hand, discovering that heaven towards which they will forever seek to rush, will remain eternally closed to them, and that the torments they undergo are never to come to an end, a despair is enkindled within their souls, which becomes the most unbearable of all their tortures: hence, that gnashing of teeth: *Ibi erit stridor dentium.* Tears unceasingly destined to flow! Gnashing of teeth which is to be interminable!

The damned perceive, by the infinite light of eternal truth, that, through their own willful rebellion, they have lost God forever; God, who is infinite happiness, and the source of all gifts; and they know at the same time that their torments will be eternal. It is this knowledge and this certainty which enkindle in them that despair, which is hell within hell.

[1] Matth. xiii, 42.

Here, let us listen to a great saint, Saint Peter of Alcantara, whose soul Saint Theresa saw ascending directly to heaven:

"To all these woes is added the eternity of suffering, which is as it were the seal and the key of the whole. No doubt, all that would still be endurable if it had an end, because nothing that will terminate can be called great. But a pain which is endless, from which there is neither relief nor respite, and which never lessens; a torment, from which there is no hope of escaping, one day, by dying, a torment which leaves the victim with the certainty of being forever banished from heaven, and cast into everlasting fire; such a torment is assuredly sufficient to overwhelm the mind of any one who devotes attentive meditation to the subject.

"This pain is incontrovertibly the most intense of all the tortures undergone in that frightful abode. For, if all these tortures were only to last a limited time, even were it a thousand years, a hundred thousand years, or, as a holy doctor says, if they could hope for an end of their suffering, after all the water contained in the ocean had been removed at the rate of one drop every thousand years, that would still afford them some kind of consolation.

"It is not to be so however; their tortures are to equal the eternity of God.

"I adjure you then, you who read these pages, to meditate upon the eternal duration of the pains of hell. Let this meditation become the nourishment of your soul, for, as the Eternal Truth warns you in the gospel, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away!*" (1)

[1] Luke, xxi. 33.

CHAPTER XX.

March 4th, 1858, last day of the fortnight.—More than twenty thousand persons surround the Grotto.—The immaculate Virgin appears to Bernadette, ordering her to drink and wash herself at the miraculous fountain, as she had previously been commanded to do, at each apparition, since the fountain issued from the rock.—She repeats the injunction that Bernadette inform the priests that she wishes a sanctuary and processions at this spot.—Bernadette begs the immaculate Virgin to tell her Her name: the sole reply is a gracious smile.—Her name is revealed however, on the evening of that same day, by a striking miracle.

In every town, village and hamlet of the Pyrenees, the subject of the apparitions was the all-engrossing theme of conversation.

The good people of this mountaineous region, who had preserved undiminished the faith of their fathers, entertained no doubt that the queen of heaven was the mysterious lady who appeared to Bernadette.—They were strengthened in their belief by the miraculous cures wrought by the waters of the Grotto, and through the invocation of the most Holy Virgin. Thus, in their opinion, the Grotto of the Massabielle rocks was a sanctuary, which the mother of God herself had chosen, and where she contemplated pouring forth her favors abundantly. Her recommendation that sinners

should be prayed for, the word *penance*, which she uttered three times, with so much emotion, proved clearly enough that she, whose voice was heard, and whose merciful embrace was extended, could be no other than the advocate, the mother of poor sinners.

It was widely known that the 4th of March was to be the last day of the fortnight, and on this account a general rush occurred. People came to Lourdes, not only from the Pyrenees and the adjacent Departments, but also from the more remote sections of France. Those who dwelt among the Pyrenees said to each other, like the shepherds at Bethlehem of old: "Let us go and see for ourselves, what has been told us, concerning the apparitions of the queen of heaven to one of our own mountain children. Let us go and witness the prodigy; let us also pray in the Grotto, drink of this miraculous water and receive the blessing of the most holy mother of God, in order that it may abide forever in our souls and amidst our families." The population of this region therefore undertook the journey, and before sunrise on the 4th of March, countless throngs began to stream into Lourdes, from all the mountain paths; and along with them came the inhabitants of the neighboring Departments, and pilgrims from other portions of France. By sunrise, twenty thousand catholics had gathered in various localities near the Grotto. Several thousands of these pilgrims had been walking all night. The weather was splendid; the temperature was moderate and the sky unclouded. It should be remarked here, that this was always the case, from the first apparition to the one

which was destined to make the 4th of March an imperishable date. Besides the twenty thousand pilgrims who were already on the spot, as just mentioned, fresh multitudes continued to pour in from all sides. The persons who pressed forward towards the Grotto, on this occasion, may well be numbered among those "whose hearts God had touched: *Quorum tetigerat Deus corda.*" (1) They formed a valiant elite of believers; God had chosen them to be witnesses of His prodigies, which they were, afterwards, to proclaim to the world.

The sun had already risen, and it was shining upon an innumerable concourse of pilgrims encamped upon the banks of the Gave, and on the hills opposite the Grotto. It was a spectacle the like of which the Pyrenees had never before presented. All ages were represented—old men, children, tender virgins, men of youthful and more mature years, young mothers holding their babes in their arms; many had been thus loaded down all night. Faith was displayed on every countenance; this immense gathering was actuated by religious feeling. The fatigues of the journey were all forgotten—every thought of earth had disappeared. These souls, intent on the queen of heaven, aspired only to be witnesses of the prodigy of her apparition.

Bernadette, accompanied by her mother, appears at last on the road leading to the Grotto. She was dressed in her peasant costume and was as poorly clad as the very poorest. As she is led on by God, she is possessed of a holy assurance mingled with an air of can-

(1) I. Kings, x. 26.

dor and modesty. An outburst of joy occurs as soon as she is perceived, and as soon as her name is proclaimed: "Here comes the saint! here is the privileged child of the most Blessed Virgin!" The eyes and the hearts of all follow her to the Grotto.

Bernadette has no sooner knelt down, than this entire multitude follow her example. It would seem as though the legions of heavenly spirits, which act as a guard of honor to the mother of God, impress upon these catholics something of the respect they themselves entertain for their sovereign, and it would appear as though this assemblage were within a sanctuary, at the most solemn moment of the sacrifice.

And now, Bernadette has humbly begun to pray: the immaculate Virgin immediately appears to her; the light issuing from the queen of heaven is reflected upon the child, whom the sight of such inexpressible beauty throws into ecstasy.

"The most Holy Virgin appears!" is the cry which in an instant has spread throughout the immense assembly. Every heart throbs under the influence of an all-pervading emotion, tears flow, and with joined hands this multitude pray. The most Holy Virgin has propitiated heaven, and has come down upon earth. This sanctuary, hollowed out in the rock of the Grotto, is her throne. She causes the holiness of her presence to be felt by all these people, whose faith has attracted them to her. Their hearts experience a suave superhuman something, which cannot be described, but which penetrates into the inmost recesses of the soul, and which leaves an indelible imprint for life. The

queen and the mother of christians, the immaculate Virgin, displays her munificence and her tenderness at the same time: as her soul is the habitation of the Holy Ghost, so does she infuse the unction of that divine spirit into the hearts of these people.

Bernadette alone beholds the immaculate Virgin face to face; the by-standers feel her presence by faith and offer her every proof of veneration and love.

On that day, which brings together so many witnesses who surround her, the immaculate Virgin orders Bernadette to drink and wash herself at the fountain of the Grotto, and to eat of the herbs which grow around its margin. She has enjoined this same action upon her at all the apparitions, from the time that the miraculous fountain issued from the rock.—Bernadette obeys promptly, as she had done on the occasion of the other apparitions.

We have said above, how the immaculate Virgin, in ordering Bernadette to wash herself and to drink at the fountain of the Grotto, addressed herself to every member of the church, to all the nations of the earth, inviting them to bathe themselves and to drink at the fountain of grace and redemption, which flows from the lacerated side and the wounds of Jesus Christ, of which divine fountain the water of the Grotto is but the symbolic representation.

In the same manner, when, during one of the apparitions, the immaculate Virgin said to Bernadette:—"Penance, penance, penance!" she caused this exclamation issuing from the depths of her heart to be heard by all the peoples of the earth. She invites all sinners to repentance and penance.

The object of her appearing on this rock in the Pyrenees is to reconcile them with God, and to open for them the gates of heaven. She wishes to transform this Grotto into the sanctuary of her clemency, where she will, with extended arms, from century to century, welcome all sinners who may come to implore her assistance.

It is for this reason, that during the apparition on the 4th of March, she repeats to Bernadette the command she had already several times expressed: "Go, my daughter, and tell the priests that I desire a sanctuary be erected in my honor upon this spot, and that processions should take place here."

Bernadette promises to transmit this message faithfully.

But as the curate of Lourdes had ordered her to ask the lady her name, the child, out of obedience, puts the question. The immaculate Virgin answers simply by a gracious smile. She seems to reply to her childish simplicity: "Why ask me to pronounce a name which all the people, here assembled, pronounce, and which so many hearts have spoken ever since the first apparition?"

An hour glided by whilst this mysterious interview between the queen of heaven and Bernadette lasted, in presence of this chosen throng of believers. The immaculate Virgin again smiled upon Bernadette, and before returning to her heavenly home, she cast a maternal glance upon the family surrounding her, and gave them her blessing.

Bernadette having recovered consciousness, is about

to return to Lourdes. But, as it can be readily expected, she is surrounded by the pilgrims, who urge her to tell what she has seen and heard. In her capacity as a faithful messenger of the queen of heaven, she declares having first received the order to drink and wash herself at the fountain of the Grotto, and then the command, already mentioned, to say to the priests that the Blessed Virgin wished that a sanctuary be erected in her honor on that spot, which should also be the scene of processions.

Bernadette makes her way through the immense crowd in her usual humble, calm and simple manner, not suspecting how great an object of veneration she has become. On that very day, she delivers her message faithfully to the curate of Lourdes.

It would be impossible to describe the joy of the pilgrims who were present upon this occasion, one of the most memorable of all, for it was the last day of the fortnight. They had witnessed the prodigy of the apparition. Bernadette had been wrapt in ecstasy in presence of a vast concourse of people. What she had just told them, namely, that the queen of heaven desired a temple should be erected at the Grotto, at which processions were to be had, rendered their happiness complete. In the liveliness of their faith, they beheld this temple already erected, and pilgrims pouring into Lourdes from all parts of France and of the entire world.

On this day the language of the church, at the birth of the Saviour, may be applied with propriety to the sky of Lourdes: "*Hodie melliflui facti sunt cœli:* From

the heavens, to day, is distilled only the dew of clemency, mercy and forgiveness." And as the sky of Lourdes is to-day, so will it continue to be, through the presence of the immaculate Virgin in her sanctuary; the same sky is destined to shine resplendent, for centuries, over the heads of christians who come to implore the mother of God in this miraculous Grotto.

Bernadette has scarcely started upon her return to Lourdes, before the fortunate pilgrims who had just listened to her words, seek to enter the Grotto, to contemplate with their own eyes the place where the most Blessed Virgin appeared to her: to see the miraculous fountain, whose water they drink and carry to their homes. But as there are thousands of persons present much time is consumed, and, although there occurs no break in the flow of people during the entire day, yet, at five o'clock in the afternoon, there still remain nearly six hundred pilgrims who have yet to enter the Grotto.

After having satisfied their devotion, they return to their homes, and, as they had been attracted by the Spirit of God, they become the expounders of the marvels they have witnessed.

CHAPTER XXI.

Miraculous cure of a little child of Lourdes on the evening of the last day of the fortnight.

We have just described this day of grace and blessing, when the august mother of God, who, in the morning, had not consented to tell her name to Bernadete, will reveal it in the evening by performing a great miracle in favor of a child, two years of age, belonging to an humble plebeian family. John Bouhohorts and Croisine Ducouts, the parents of this child, are day laborers. Croisine, Justin's mother, (for such was the name of the little boy) was acquainted with Lóuis Bourriette, and knew that, besides him, other persons in Lourdes had been miraculously cured. She was aware that these cures had been wrought by the water of the Grotto and the invocation of the most Blessed Virgin. Croisine had been present at the apparitions; she had witnessed the transfiguration of Bernadette, whilst in the act of saying her beads. She had no doubt of its being the most Blessed Virgin who appeared to the child. She was firmly convinced that the fountain of the Grotto had sprung up at the bidding of the divine mother, and that it was owing to her all-powerful influence with God, that the miraculous cures had been obtained.

Thus she already possessed faith. And we will see

this faith, taking new proportions all of a sudden,—shine forth so brilliantly, that people, that catholic society, will be able to apply to her the language of Jesus Christ to the woman of Canaan: "O woman, great is thy faith: *O mulier, magna est fides tua!*" (1)

Contemporaneous history affords but few scenes in which sublimity, touching character and faith, are so prominent as in that which we are about to witness.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon, on the last day of the fortnight, whilst there were still five or six hundred persons in the neighborhood of the Grotto, the child of this woman, so full of faith, was almost on the point of expiring. He was only two years old, and having been sick since the time of his birth, his strength was exhausted; his skin appeared to adhere to the bones; and he resembled a corpse rather than a living child. Life was almost extinct: the palor of death had already shown itself upon his countenance, the livid hues of dissolution were discernible, respiration had become imperceptible, and the eyes were glazed. He was motionless and made no sound, nor could his breathing be detected any longer.

"He is dead!" said the father, with tears in his eyes and his soul stricken with grief.

"No, he is not dead," replies the mother, in tones inspired by supernatural confidence.

"Dear friend," exclaims Franconnette Gozos, one of her neighbors, "do not stay here, go and cry in that room, do not witness so heartrending a spectacle, do not see him die! I will take your place by the side of

(1) Matth. xv. 28.

the child." She was, even then, holding the shroud in her hands.

Now the miracle begins: this mother, this woman, animated by that faith which obtains prodigies, remains immovable by the side of the crib.

Croisine, raising her thoughts and her heart to the most Blessed Virgin, the mother of grace and mercy, offers up her son, and implores the maternal goodness, the all-powerful influence of the mother of God: "O most powerful Virgin, restore him to me!" she exclaims.

After this colloquy, of which no external manifestation was given, after this supreme outburst of a mother's heart, addressed to the heart of another mother, who is the mother of God, Croisine is herself no longer.

"No," cries she, "my son is not dead, and even if he were, the most Blessed Virgin will restore him to me.. I will carry him to her, at the Grotto: I will plunge him into the miraculous water, and the divine mother will cure him for me!"

It is useless for her friends to attempt to dissuade her from this project: every objection must yield to a resolution inspired by heaven.

She takes the child out of the crib, wraps him gently in her apron, and runs towards the Grotto, exclaiming "Holy Virgin give him back to me!"

Having reached the Grotto, she prostrates herself before the spot where the Virgin appears. She makes the sign of the cross over herself and over her child; she elevates him in her arms towards the immaculate Virgin, whom, with the eyes of faith, she contemplates, as though materially present: "O Virgin, O most pow-

erful mother, cure him by means of the miraculous water!"

After this exclamation, she rises, goes directly to the basin, and throwing herself upon her knees, she plunges the child up to his chin in the water.

This conduct astonishes some people who, witnessing her actions, become indignant and murmur. Their comments reach her ears, but her soul being wrapt in a higher sphere, the language used falls short of its mark. An attempt is then made to remove Croisine from the spot.

Without saying a word, this devoted mother's suppliant but decided look is easily interpreted to mean: "Leave me alone."

With a steady hand, and her thoughts raised on high to the most holy mother of God, whom she unceasingly implores, she keeps her child thus immersed in the basin for fully a quarter of an hour.

God thus permits this woman, whose faith is so lively, to prolong the time during which her child is kept immersed, in order that the miracle may be the more striking. Because, Justin, in the dying condition in which he was, should have expired at the very instant he was plunged into this icy water. Certainly, the great duration of his immersion would have sufficed to kill him a hundred times. He was in such a state, too, that it seemed likely he would die in his mother's arms whilst on the way to the Grotto, and that, merely from the shock due to transportation.

What was taking place during this astonishing immersion? The mother's faith was displayed heroically:

"I will keep him in this miraculous water, O most powerful Virgin, until you will have cured him!" Such exceeding faith moved the heart of the mother of God. She therefore ordered the chilly water to impart the warmth of life to the already stiff, motionless and cold form of the child. She allowed her gaze to rest upon him and she blessed him. This gaze and this blessing were the means of instilling into the child's limbs life giving treasures, whose effects were suddenly to be most brilliantly revealed. In her inmost soul, Croisine feels that the most holy mother of God has listened to her prayer.

She withdraws the child from the basin, wraps him anew in her apron, kneels before the sanctuary of the Virgin to whom she offers her boy, begging that he may be blessed, and starts for home at a rapid gait.

She lays the child back in his crib. He is motionless and cold.

"You see," exclaims the father, "he is dead!"

"No," replies Croisine, "the Blessed Virgin is all-powerful. She will cure him!"

Some time elapses. The mother approaches the crib, and listening attentively, cries out, "he is breathing!" The father also then draws near, and he too hears the the child breathing. What a ray of hope! Respiration soon becomes regular and the child passes into a sound slumber, which lasts all night.

At daybreak, he awakens; seeing his mother, he smiles; he tries to get up, but his mother is afraid to let him do so; he seeks the breast, upon which he seizes eagerly, and does the same thing several times in the course of the day.

The germ of life, deposited in him by the immaculate Virgin whilst he was kept immersed, is now undergoing developement, and the most astounding tranformation is visibly produced. His eyes sparkle, the roseate blush of health is upon his cheek, his strength returns, he is cured!

Night comes on: he sleeps soundly. The next morning, finding that he is still asleep, his father and mother leave him undisturbed in his crib and repair to their work.

The mother returns in a couple of hours, and what does she see? Her boy Justin, who had never as yet been able to walk, is running steadily and confidently all around the room. He had gotten out of his crib by himself. At this sight, her happiness is so great that she almost faints. Her good angel however sustains her. The child rushes to her embrace; she raises him towards heaven: "O Virgin, who hast restored him to me, be thou for ever blessed!" cries she with rapturous gratitude.

The father's surprise is equally great, when, on his return, he too finds Justin, whom he had given up, risen as it were from the dead, and full of life. Just at this moment, Franconnette Gozos came in; she was the neighbor who had held in her hands the shroud in which the child was to be buried; tears of joy burst from her eyes and she exclaims: "What a miracle! he was about to breathe his last, and here he is restored to the full vigor of health."

"He has been cured ever since yesterday," said the mother, "when he wanted to get up and walk. And I,

woman of little faith that I was, not recognizing the favor granted by God, and the miracle wrought by the Blessed Virgin, I prevented him from doing as he wished."

The hearts of all overflow with gratitude; all kneel down; the mother makes the child clasp and raise his hands to heaven. They express to God, and to the most Holy Virgin, their gratitude for a benefit so great, for a miracle so patent.

The report of this prodigious cure, obtained on the last day of the fortnight, spread with inconceivable rapidity throughout Lourdes, the Department of the Upper Pyrenees and the surrounding country. It afforded catholics a new demonstration, which present ed the certainty of proof, of the reality of the apparitions of the most Holy Virgin.

CHAPTER XXII.

On the 25th of March, 1858, Feast of the Annunciation, the most Blessed Virgin appears to Bernadette, and says to her:

"I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION."

From the very outset, the masses, on hearing the description of the apparition given by Bernadette, with the unerring instinct of faith, had asserted: "It is the most Blessed Virgin!" And they were not deceived.

And in truth, what other being could be cast in the mould of her whom Bernadette had seen; to whom else could be ascribed the cause of her being thrown into the ecstasy described so minutely? This form so virginal, so beautiful; that forehead so pure and resplendent; those eyes, whose beauty was not that of earth; that look so holy, so tender, so maternal; that mouth whose outlines were perfection, more than human, nay more than angelic; those hands, whose whiteness exceeded so prodigiously that of the lily and of the snow; that head, whose majesty was so august; that veil of incomparable splendor, which, falling in chaste folds down to the hem of her garment, covered her shoulders and arms and formed a royal mantle; that dazzingly white dress, that azure cincture girt around her immaculate frame, with its double fold of ribbon

drooping down with so much grace; those two golden-hued roses blooming upon her feet; that chaplet, formed of alabaster beads strung on a chain of gold, hanging from her right arm (it will be remembered that she had carried the cross of that chaplet to her forehead in order to encourage Bernadette to do the same); that light, in the midst of which the Virgin was wont to appear, and in comparison with which, that of the sun is very darkness; finally, that beauty so engrossing, so far removed from all human conceptions, that, according to Bernadette, it was an outrage to compare it with the most perfect beauties of earth, which, when placed side by side with this beauty from heaven, did but fill her soul with disgust.

With the foregoing picture before them, the masses had said: "It can only be the immaculate Virgin, the most holy mother of God!" And this belief, which was the work of the Holy Ghost, not only never varied, but on the contrary constantly gathered fresh strength. It was confirmed by the miracles. The sick were cured by using the water of the Grotto, and by invoking the most Blessed Virgin.

Louis Bourriette, the quarry-man, blind in his right eye for twenty years, had said to his daughter: "Go and get for me some of the water of the Grotto; the most Blessed Virgin can cure me!" He invoked her and he was cured.

Justin being at the point of death, his mother said: "I will carry him to the Grotto; I will plunge him into the water of the miraculous fountain, and the most Blessed Virgin will cure him for me!" And the child was cured.

In a word, it was through the invocation of the most Blessed Virgin that all the other miraculous cures had been effected. People had recourse to the water of the fountain; they invoked the all-powerful influence of the mother of God, and their prayers were granted.

The multitudes who had surrounded Bernadette during the various apparitions, were convinced that she, who appeared to the child, was the most Blessed Virgin.

Bernadette had several times requested—as she is about to do again on the present occasion—the lady who appeared to her, to tell her name, and the immaculate Virgin had always replied by a gracious smile. She seemed to say, as well to Bernadette as to the clergy and people: "The name which you ask of me, read it in the miracles which I perform in favor of those who invoke me, as the mother of God and the dispenser of His graces,"

On this account, in the answer which she is to make on this day to renewed solicitations on the part of Bernadette, passing somewhat over her own name, she will rather point out the title under which she desires to be invoked in the sanctuary, whose erection she has requested.

For the expression of this title, she selects the day of the most glorious anniversary in her life, as it is also the fairest day which ever dawned upon the world since the creation. This day was the 25th of March, the Feast of the Annunciation. On this day, an archangel, kneeling in her presence, had saluted her with the words: *Ave gratia plena*, and had announced to her the plan of the Adorable Trinity. And she had an-

swered: "*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum:* may it be done unto me, according to Thy word." At that very instant, heaven came nearer to earth, the Word was made flesh in the womb of the immaculate Virgin, and Mary became the mother of God. On that day, she was crowned queen of heaven and sovereign of the world. She had just contracted an affinity with God, than which no other relationship could be closer. She had entered upon a divine affinity with the three adorable persons of the most Holy Trinity, inasmuch as she became the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son, and the spouse of the Holy Ghost. The dignity attached to the divine maternity was the most elevated that God could confer upon a simple creature, for it would be necessary, as Saint Thomas remarks, that God Himself should be greater than He is, in order to render the creation of a higher dignity possible.

The Blessed Virgin therefore selected the anniversary of the most auspicious day which ever dawned upon herself and the human race, and upon which these words of the Creed had met with their fulfillment: "*Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de cœlis et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.*"

On the morning of that holy day, the gaze of the immaculate Virgin, the most holy mother of God, had been directed towards Bernadette. The humble and candid child had immediately felt the benign influence of that irresistible power which attracted her to the sanctuary of the Massabielle rocks. Her heart told her that she would behold once more the celestial beauty,

whose appearance had so often thrown her into ecstasy. She hastens therefore to repair to the Grotto. As the news of her intended visit spreads immediately, nearly all the inhabitants of the city rush out to join her.—Those who had been miraculously cured were the most eager to arrive first.

The sky was unclouded; the snow had melted in the valley, but still shining upon the mountain tops, it afforded a brilliant symbol of the immaculate whiteness of her who was about to appear.

Bernadette approaches the threshold of the Grotto. All eyes salute her, all hearts accompany her, for she is looked upon as an angel.

She kneels down to pray, and all also kneel and unite with her in prayer. Suddenly, in the midst of this holy recollection, the celestial light shines and the immaculate Virgin appears. Bernadette is immediately wrapt in ecstasy: "It is the most Holy Virgin! She appears to her!" is the cry of those who see that Bernadette is transfigured and radiant with splendor. And, with the rapidity of lightning, the same cry spreads, from rank to rank, throughout this immense assemblage: "It is the most Holy Virgin!—She appears to her!" And all these people are thrilled with joy, exclaiming: "She is about to bless us!"—They clasp their hands in fervent prayer. Whilst they are praying, Bernadette is delivering her message; let us listen to what she says:

"'O my lady, will you have the goodness to tell me who you are, and what is your name?'

"Her only reply is a smile.

"I insist:

"'O my lady, will you have the goodness to tell me who you are, and what is your name?'

"She is still silent.

"Without losing confidence, I repeat for the third time: 'O my lady, will you have the goodness to tell me who you are, and what is your name?'

"Again, she makes no answer, but her silence encourages me and I feel emboldened to ask her for the fourth time:

"'O my lady, will you have the goodness to tell me who you are, and what is your name?'

"The Virgin's hands were crossed; she separated them, slipping the chaplet she was holding on to her right arm. Then she opened her arms, directing them towards the ground, as though her virginal hands were about to impart a benediction; then crossing her hands again and raising them to her breast, she looked towards heaven, and pronounced these words:

'I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.'

"She appears thus to me for several moments, and then she vanishes from my sight."

These words, which the queen of heaven had just uttered:

"I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION,"

Bernadette heard them for the first time, and she did not understand their meaning.

For this reason, whilst on her way from the Grotto to the presbytery, she kept repeating these words, not to forget, and to be able to transmit them faithfully.

Having reached the presence of the curate of Lourdes

she relates to him what has just occurred during this apparition, and how the lady told her, before disappearing:

"I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION."

The child admitted to the Reverend Mr. Peyramale that she did not understand these words. That venerable clergyman, who recognized in them so manifest an answer to the question he had ordered Bernadette to ask the lady, blessed God from the bottom of his heart and explained to the child the signification of the language he had just heard.

"She who appeared and said to you:

'I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION,'

is the most Blessed Virgin, the mother of God. She has called herself the Immaculate Conception because she was conceived without the stain of original sin, with which all the children of Adam are born. And it is now an article of faith that she was conceived without sin, for our holy father, Pope Pius IX, has defined this as a dogma of faith for the entire catholic church. Thus my child, you must believe with all your heart and soul, that Mary, the most holy mother of God, was conceived without sin."

Bernadette replies immediately: "I do believe it, with all my heart and soul. And henceforward I shall know that it was the most Blessed Virgin who appeared to me."

This occurred at about nine o'clock in the morning; Bernadette left the presbytery radiant with joy; she understood the words she had heard whilst in ecstasy. A crowd eager for information gathers around her; to

their questions she replies with delight, that she knows now, that the lady who appeared to her was the most Blessed Virgin, and that during the apparition on that very day, she had said these words: "I am the Immaculate Conception." Confirmation of Bernadette's assertion emanates at the same time from the presbytery. Mr. Peyramale, the happy catechist of the embassadress of the queen of heaven, makes known the language, whose meaning he had just explained to the little girl. The joy of the multitude still lingering about the Grotto, reaches its height at these tidings, when they are informed of this declaration of Bernadette, and of their venerable pastor. Now that they possess a certainty, they exclaim with unutterable emotion: "It is indeed, as we always believed, she who appeared to Bernadette, is really the most Holy Virgin, the immaculate Virgin, the Immaculate Conception! We know it now from her own lips. May she be forever blessed! This day, on which she has told us her name, will never be erased from our memory; and the blessing we have received from her upon this occasion will be a pledge of eternal happiness for our families and for ourselves.

"We will come and pray to her in this holy Grotto; we will supplicate her to be really the Immaculate Conception towards our souls, that is to say, the Virgin who crushes the head of the serpent, the Virgin whose victory is eternal!"

Throughout this entire day, Bernadette repeats with holy zeal the words of the most Blessed Virgin, to the countless pilgrims who come to pay her a visit. And

the child, many a time in the course of the day, imitates with candor and simplicity, the gestures made and the attitude assumed by the queen of heaven whilst saying to her: "I am the Immaculate Conception!"

Universal joy is caused by this revelation on the part of the most Blessed Virgin declaring and calling herself the Immaculate Conception, but this joy is no where more lively than in Bernadette's soul. For her this joy has special features. How singularly the light imparting the understanding of the words: "I am the Immaculate Conception," penetrates her soul! How wonderfully her past and her future career are illumined, all of a sudden! And at the close of this apostolic day, which she devotes to giving testimony on behalf of the immaculate Virgin, how sweet are for her the early hours of night, when, at length in solitude and silence, she can fathom and realize all that has been done by the immaculate Virgin in her favor!— How great her effusion of joy at the contemplation of this wonder! How profound her emotions of gratitude and love towards God, and towards the mother of God!

Thus then, O Lord my God! She who appears to me so often, is the immaculate Virgin, the Virgin conceived without spot, the queen of heaven and earth, the most holy mother of my Saviour Jesus Christ! When I was reciting my beads at the Grotto and saying: "Hail Mary, full of grace," it was then her own self I was addressing!

Thus it is, that this divine mother who has shown me so much love, who has smiled upon me with so

much goodness, who has been graciously pleased to select me as the instrument of transmission of her wishes and commands, and who, despite my weakness, has made me her confidant and messenger, and, to crown my happiness, has given me the sweet appellation of her daughter!

It is then the most holy mother of God who said to me on the occasion of the third apparition: "I promise to make you happy, not in this world but in the next!" I shall therefore be eternally happy, since the promise made by the mother of my God cannot fail!—I shall then see her in the next world, not for a few passing hours, as was the case during her apparitions here below, but uninterruptedly and for ever! And that ecstasy into which the light of Herself threw me during the fleeting instants when she appeared to me, shall be the eternal and permanent condition of my soul!

CHAPTER XXIII.

The creation of the Immaculate Virgin, God's greatest masterpiece after the Incarnation of the Word.—Privileges with which God favors the Immaculate Virgin.

The most lovely day which ever dawned upon the world was that of the Incarnation of the Word. The Immaculate Conception of the most Blessed Virgin is the aurora of that day. The Blessed Virgin once said to Saint Bridget: "My Immaculate Conception was the golden hour, whose price was inestimable for the world, for it marked the beginning of its salvation." With faith and love as our guides, let us attend to the prodigies which God performs at this holy and solemn hour; for the Virgin, whom he is about to create Immaculate is, at once, our sister and our mother; our sister, because she is a child of Adam, and our mother because she is the mother of the Redeemer of the human race.

The Word made flesh and dwelling among us is God's incomparable masterpiece; exhaustive of His attributes and which He displays in the fullness of time. The whole force of the divine power is put forth in Christ. God can go no further; for the Word is made flesh, and man becomes God. The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin is, as it were, the outline of this divine

masterpiece, whose fundamental features it presents: it is Christ begun.

According to the thought expressed by Tertullian, God, in creating the first man, had before his mind, Christ who was to appear in the plenitude of time, and He shaped Adam after this model: *Quidquid limus exprimebatur, Christus cogitabatur homo futurus.*

Now that He is about to create from nothing the mother of His son Jesus Christ, He reproduces in the mother, with indescribable perfection, the divine image of the Son, the resemblance being striking in every feature. He gives her a body immaculate and virginal, like that of Christ; He gives her a soul, immaculate and virginal, also like that of Christ.

The three divine Persons, concurring in the production of this masterpiece, create the future mother of the Incarnate Word, of Christ the Redeemer. They create her innocent, pure, immaculate, exempt from original sin and resplendent with every gift of holiness. Not only do they create her full of grace, free consequently from the yoke of the demon and unassailable by his venom, but also in all the splendor of victory and in the most noble attitude of triumph. At the very instant of her creation, she appears to all the heavenly spirits, setting her virginal heel, more terrible than lightning, upon the head of the dragon, crushing it, and hurling him, conquered forever, to the lowest depths of hell.

Thus does she verify the language addressed by God to the serpent, after the fall of Adam and Eve: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy

seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." (1)

It was becoming the divinity, that she, who was to be elevated to the dignity of mother of God, should be conceived without stain, that she should crush the serpent's head, and that, on leaving the hands of the Creator, the splendor and fullness of grace bestowed upon her, should eclipse the grace conferred upon all the heavenly spirits and all the saints united. It is meet that God, on introducing into the world her who is to be eternally the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son and the spouse of the Holy Ghost, should display her upon a height inaccessible to the demon, whence she can contemplate beneath her feet the heavens and the earth, which will be subject to her dominion. In a word, it is fitting that God should manifest her near to Himself, in close proximity to His adorable essence, so that her origin and her birth may be the very light of the Divinity itself. There, where angels and saints come to an end, the Virgin begins. On the topmost heights of these mountains of sanctity, are laid the foundations of the unutterable sanctity of the virgin mother of God. And, according to the expression of the prophet-king, which is applied to her, Mary soars from the loftiest height in heaven:—*A summo cœlo egressio ejus.*

This powerful argument, derived from the fitness devolving upon the Divinity, appears foremost in the Bull by which Pius IX defines the Immaculate Conception of the most Blessed Virgin, as a dogma of faith

(1) Gen., iii. 15.

On this account, the language of the Vicar of Jesus Christ must remain forever engraven, or rather must be kept alive in the mind and in the heart of every child of the catholic church.

"God, in His adorable wisdom, having, from all eternity, decreed the salvation of the world through the incarnation of the Word, from the very beginning and before the centuries were, selected and prepared for His only son, a mother, of whom, by His Incarnation, He was to be born, when the happy moment should have arrived in the fullness of time; and He loved her with a love so far exceeding that which He entertained for all other creatures, that He bestowed upon her alone His most tender complacency. On this account, far more than was the case with all the angelic host and all the saints, did He endow her in so admirable a manner with the abundance of all the heavenly graces contained in the treasury of His divinity, that always exempt from any kind of stain of sin, supremely beautiful and all-perfect, she bore within herself a plenitude of sanctity and innocence such, that after God, it would be impossible to imagine the existence of any greater being, and that, God alone excepted, no being could comprehend its grandeur:—*Eam innocentiæ et sanctitatis plenitudinem præ se ferret, qua major, sub Deo, nullatenus intelligitur, et quam, præter Deum, nemo assequi cogitando potest.*

"It was indeed eminently befitting, *Et quidem decebat omnino*, she should shine with the lustre of the most perfect holiness, and that entirely exempt from even the slightest stain of original sin, she should

achieve the most complete triumph over the serpent, that old enemy of man; for was she not the venerable mother to whom God, the Father, resolved to give His only begotten Son, equal to Himself, and whom He loves as He loves Himself, in such a manner, that this Son should naturally be, at one and the same time, both the Son of God the Father, and the Son of the Virgin; that mother whom the Son Himself has chosen as His mother in the flesh, and of whom the Holy Ghost has willed that by His operation should be conceived and born the One from whom He Himself proceeds."

Such is the Immaculate Conception of that divine Virgin; let us now set forth, according to the Fathers, the doctors and the theologians, those privileges which are, as it were, its necessary consequences.

How admirable the consolation and the security, we catholics enjoy, with regard to the most holy mother of God, in adopting the thoughts and sentiments of the greatest saints and most eminent doctors of the church; and, at the same time, how great the spiritual advantages to be derived from studying tqe most Blessed Virgin at their school! They make us know her; and the more intimately we doknow her, the greater becomes our love, so that the more we love her, the more fully developed in us is the mark of our predestination, and the more precious is the token of eternal salvation which we possess. We know this by the affirmations of Father de La Colombière, one of the most apostolic, most holy and most enlightened men of his time, who speaks as the interpreter of all

shades of theological opinion. "All catholics," says he, "are of this opinion, and I have no doubt, taking this universal consent into consideration, that it approaches almost to an article of faith to believe that the possession of a peculiar love and respect for Mary, is equivalent to a mark of predestination and, as it were, a token of our happiness." (Sermon on the nativity of the most Blessed Virgin.)

According to the teaching of the church (1) the first privilege of the immaculate Virgin is the perfect use of reason from the very instant of her creation. As soon as her soul is united to her immaculate body, she is able to know God, to render Him thanks, to bless Him and to offer herself to Him, as a perpetual sacrifice of love. Acting immediately with all the interior activity due to the ineffable grace which she received with life, she elevates herself towards God, and makes an act of love so intense, that it transcends the love of all the heavenly spirits and that of all the saints. Such are the first fruits of the love which this immaculate Virgin bears towards God; this first awakening of her spirit in God begins the continued series of acts of love, always increasing in intensity, always more perfect and more meritorious, which will make up the life of the mother of the Saviour of the world.

The second privilege enjoyed by the Virgin, is to have been confirmed in grace from the very moment of her Immaculate Conception. This privilege, with which she is endowed from the first instant of her life,

(1) In this statement of the privileges of the Virgin, we follow Suarez, from whom we quote.

attains its full consummation at the moment when she conceives the Son of God in her chaste womb. The foregoing is the language of Saint Thomas, who says: *In conceptione Filii, consummata est in gratia confirmante Eam in bono.*

The consequence of this admirable privilege was that the immaculate Virgin did not sin, even venially, once in the whole course of her long life. There does not exist the slightest doubt upon this point; for, besides the unanimous assent of the Fathers and Doctors of the church, the sixth Œcumenical Council defined "that the Virgin was exempt from all contagion and all stain, in her body, in her soul, and in her mind."

This doctrine is confirmed by the Holy Council of Trent: "If any one says that man can, without a special privilege from God, such as the church teaches existed in regard to the most Blessed Virgin, during his whole life avoid all sin, even venial sin, let him be anathema." (Session vi. canon 23.)

Another ineffable privilege of the immaculate Virgin is her having received the plenitude of all graces by the fact of her original sanctification. Such is the doctrine of Saint Thomas and of the Fathers of the church. "It is with reason, says Saint Jerome, that Mary is saluted as being full of grace, because that grace, which is only partially given to others, has been poured out in all its plenitude upon Mary:—*Bene gratia plena dicitur, quia cæteris per partes præstatur, Mariæ vero se tota infudit plenitudo gratiæ.*" (Serm. de Assumptione.)

The graces granted to the angels or to the saints are

as mere drops, when compared with that superabundant plenitude, with that ocean, which the Author of grace Himself poured into the soul of the immaculate Virgin. For this reason the seraphic doctor, Saint Bonaventure, exclaims justly: "All the rivers, that is to say, all the graces enter into Mary: the river of the grace of the angels; the river of the grace of the patriarchs and prophets; the river of the grace of the apostles, martyrs, confessors, doctors and virgins; in a word, all the rivers of grace enter into Mary: *Omnia charismata intrant in Mariam: flumen gratiæ angelorum intrat in Mariam; flumen gratiæ patriarcharum et prophetarum intrat in Mariam; flumen gratiæ apostolorum intrat in Mariam; flumen gratiæ martyrum, confessorum, doctorum, virginum intrat in Mariam; omnia denique flumina intrant in Mariam.*" (In Spec. cap. iii.)

And further, this plenitude of graces which was poured out upon Mary, from the very first instant of her Immaculate Conception, was more intense and copious than that enjoyed by all the angels and all mankind taken collectively, because as the Fathers and Doctors say, with reason, the foundations of that mystical abode which Divine Wisdom prepared for Itself, were laid upon the most lofty heights, and the prophet-king alludes to the Immaculate Conception, when he exclaims in regard to Zion: "The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains: the Lord loveth the gate of Zion above all the tabernacles of Jacob."—(Ps. lxxxvi. 1. 2.)

Saint Bonaventure, in order to prove the immensity of the grace with which the Virgin was endowed, says

"An immense vase can only be filled, provided what be poured into it be immense itself. Who then could measure the immensity of her, who was able to contain in her womb, Him who is greater than heaven itself?—*Immensa fuit gratia, qua ipsa plena fuit: immensum enim vas non potest esse plenum, nisi immensum sit illud quo est plenum. Maria autem vas immensissimum fuit, ex quo Illum qui cælo major est continere potuit.*"—(Bon., in Spec., cap. v.)

Saint Bernardin of Sienna thus describes the plenitude of the grace lavished upon the Virgin: "The miracle of miracles is that a woman should have conceived and begotten a God. This woman must have been elevated in some way, through the infinity of graces she received, almost to that divine perfection, which no creature has ever attained:—*Quod fœmina conceperit et pepererit Deum, est et fuit miraculum miraculorum; oportuit enim, ut sic dicam, fœminam elevari ad quamdam æqualitatem divinam per quamdam quasi infinitatem perfectionum et gratiarum, quam æqualitatem creatura unquam non experta est.*" (S. Bernardin, sermo lxi. cap. xvi.)

These were not the only privileges which God granted the immaculate Virgin. From the very first instant, she received the grace of practising all the theological and moral virtues, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and all those other virtues which theologians term acquired. Suarez thus expresses himself with regard to this privilege: "If Eve, who, according to the flesh, was to be the mother of all the human race, received this habit of practising virtue, there was

much greater reason that Mary should receive it also, since she was to be, according to the spirit, the mother of all who believe." (Part I. quest. 95, art. 3.)

By virtue of this plenitude of graces and infused habits, the immaculate Virgin enjoyed also the infused habits of science and wisdom, whence it happened that during the whole course of her mortal existence, she was never sullied by the slightest shadow of even an unpremeditated venial sin. This causes Saint Bernardin to say that the divine Virgin "in her original sanctification, received from God so many graces, that she was enabled to avoid, as she did indeed, all venial sin, which certainly only happened because she had received the greatest wisdom, by means of which she could discern what she was to believe, to do, or to avoid:—*In prima sanctificatione tantam recepit gratiam, qua omne peccatum minimum et veniale vitare potuit et omnio vitavit, quod quidem fieri non potuit, nisi maximam sapientiam acceperit omnium agendorum et vitandorum, et credendorum.*" (S. Bernardin, De Beata Virg., serm. vi. art. 3, cap. iv., tom. II.)

The same Saint, Bernardin, says elsewhere: "With regard to intelligence and reason, the Virgin received, in her original sanctification, the light of wisdom to so admirable a degree, that she perfectly comprehended creatures, the Creator, spirits, and whatever she must do and whatever she had to avoid:—*In prima sanctificatione quantum ad intellectum et rationem tanta ei sapientiæ claritas superfusa est, quod perfecte intelligebat creaturas et Creatorem, et spiritus, et omnia bona amplectenda et mala fugienda.*" Saint Antoninus, Albertus

Magnus, and many other Doctors share the same opinion, which is confirmed by Suarez, Blessed Canisius, and many other theologians.

All these immense privileges with which the immaculate Virgin was endowed from the moment of her conception, are only the legitimate consequences of her divine maternity; they were to be so many brilliants in her diadem. Let us listen to Suarez, in whose opinions are resumed those of all the scholastics:

"All this intensity and all this plenitude of grace, are in perfect keeping with the dignity of mother of God, because that dignity is of an order more elevated in its kind, so that, even if this grace, in its intensity, should become more perfect, it would still never exceed the limits and the exact proportions of that dignity:—*Hæc tota gratiæ intentio et plenitudo optime convenit cum dignitate Matris Dei, quia illa dignitas est altioris ordinis, et suo modo infinita: unde etiamsi in infinitum illa gratia intenderetur, nunquam excederet terminos aut debitam proportionem ejus dignitatis.*"

In presence of privileges so sublime, and of this plenitude of grace bestowed upon the immaculate Virgin, the most powerful minds in the church admit their inability to command language adequate for purposes of description: "When it becomes necessary to say what she is, all tongues stammer, and all intellects are stricken with blindness:—*In ejus narratione omnes linguæ balbutiunt, cæcutiunt intelligentiæ.*" These are the words of Saint Ambrose.

Saint Anselme, in turn, says: "When I begin to reflect upon the immensity of this grace, my mind suc-

cumbs, and I remain speechless :—*Immensitatem quippe gratiæ considerare incipienti sensus deficit, et lingua fatiscit.*"

Saint Epiphanus is not less energetic in asserting that "All tongues in heaven and on earth, whether of men or of angels, are powerless to proclaim the grandeur of that divine Virgin:—*Cui prædicandæ cælestis ac terrena lingua minime sufficit, imo nec angelorum.*"

Let us hearken now to Pius IX teaching the entire church, and let us treasure up carefully in our souls the expressions which reveal to us, so far as is possible here below, the incomprehensible grandeur of the most holy mother of God: "Hence it is the opinion not less excellent than unanimous of the Fathers of the church that the most glorious Virgin, for whom He who is powerful has done great things, has shone with such an abundance of all heavenly gifts, such fullness of grace and such innocence, that she has been an ineffable miracle of the Almighty; nay more, the crown of all miracles, and the mother of God; that she approaches as nearly to God as created nature can do, and is exalted above all human and angelic eulogies." (1)

O most holy mother of God! with all the "illustrious monuments of a venerated antiquity of the Eastern and of the Western church," (2) with all the Fathers and with Pius IX, we salute thee and proclaim thee.. "immaculate and entirely immaculate, innocent and most innocent, spotless, holy, and most distant from

(1) Bull *Ineffabilis:* Translation published with the approbation of the Archbishop of Baltimore—1855.

(2) Ibid.

every stain of sin, all pure, all perfect, the type and model of purity and innocence, more beautiful than beauty, more gracious than grace, more holy than holiness, alone holy and most pure in soul and body, thou hast surpassed all perfectness and all virginity, and hast become the dwelling place of all the graces of the most Holy Spirit, and, God alone excepted, thou art superior to all, and by nature fairer, more beautiful, and more holy than the cherubim and seraphim; and thou art she, whom all the tongues of heaven and earth do not suffice to extol!" (1)

(1) Bull *Ineffabilis:* Translation published with the approbation of the Archbishop of Baltimore—1855.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Why the apparitions of the most Blessed Virgin to Bernadette did not precede, but followed the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by Pius IX.

The plan of God being that the most Holy Virgin should be invoked and honored under the title of the Immaculate Conception in the sanctuary of Lourdes, He had decreed in His adorable wisdom that the definition of the dogma should precede the apparitions.

It will be remembered that this definition was hailed with unutterable transports of joy throughout the entire catholic world. Pius IX, in his quality of successor of Peter, being invested with infallibility, and surrounded by the bishops of the catholic universe and the representatives of all peoples yielding obedience to Jesus Christ, had raised his voice at Rome, and speaking to the city and the world, *Urbi et orbi*, he had delivered the oracle of the Holy Ghost.

" . . . By the authority of Jesus Christ our Lord, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, we declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, has been revealed by God

and therefore should firmly and constantly be believed by all the faithful." (1)

It was on the 8th of December, in the year of grace 1854, that the light of this definition dawned upon the world. The deed was consummated. What had hitherto been merely considered by the church, as a certain truth, the church now declared to be, for the future, a dogma of defined faith. This triumph of the immaculate Virgin was celebrated by unheard of rejoicings not only at Rome, but also throughout the universe—the joy was universal. Solemn thanksgivings were everywhere offered to God for this immense favor.—One of the aspirations dearest to catholics had been at last gratified. This diadem of the Immaculate Conception, which their filial love had always longed to see crowning the brow of the most Blessed Virgin, was, from this moment, placeed there by the hands of the successor of Saint Peter! The Holy Ghost had spoken through the lips of Pius IX. The children of the church knew, henceforward, with the greatest certainty there is in this world—the certainty of faith—that the most Blessed Virgin, the most august mother of God, had been conceived without stain, exempt from original sin, and that a belief to the contrary was a heresy worthy of execration, and, as such, forever condemned by the sentence of the Roman Pontiff.

Thus when, four years later, in 1858, the immaculate Virgin appeared at Lourdes, on which occasion she styled herself the "Immaculate Conception," confirm-

(1) Bull *Ineffabilis:* Translation published with the approbation of the Archbishop of Baltimore—1855.

ing this title by the authority of miracles, the minds and the hearts of catholics, which were still filled with emotion at her recent triumph, were very willing to believe in her assertion.

Her saying: "I am the Immaculate Conception," was but her own proclamation of the definition of faith pronounced by Pius IX. She merely said: "I am the Virgin, whose 'Immaculate Conception' has been defined as a dogma of faith by the infallible authority of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, my divine Son."

By these words: "I am the Immaculate Conception," she also affirmed the truth of the fact: "It is I, the immaculate Virgin, who appears here, in person, in this Grotto of the Pyrenees."

As, on the one hand, catholics already believed in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and as, on the other, they perceived that the most Blessed Virgin confirmed her declaration by the authority of miracles, they could not but be thrilled with happiness and bless God, who visited them through these apparitions of the immaculate Virgin. The title of Sanctuary of the Immaculate Conception was from that moment bestowed upon the Grotto of Lourdes. In declaring and naming herself "the Immaculate Conception," the immaculate Virgin proclaimed distinctly her wish to be invoked and honored by this title in the new sanctuary. And as this was the great design of God, His Spirit was to act upon catholics and attract them to this sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin. We have seen how fully this design was carried out. Catholics have come to this miraculous Grotto from all parts of the world;

they have invoked the divine Virgin under the title lately defined as a dogma of faith by Pius IX, and they have been favored by her with all the blessings of heaven. Mary has given proof of her all-powerful influence with God, by an incessant series of miracles.

But in order that this pilgrimage should be based upon such solid foundations, and that it should assume the character of universality which it at present enjoys and which it is destined to retain in the church, it was necessary that the immaculate Virgin should appear and that she should utter the words: "I am the Immaculate Conception," only after the definition of the dogma by the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Saint Peter.

And indeed, how are the stupendous results which followed upon these words pronounced by the immaculate Virgin to be explained? These results are due, in the first place, to the admirable dispositions of mind and heart noticed throughout the catholic world since the definition by Pius IX. In the next instance, they depend upon the conformity between the language used by the most Blessed Virgin, and the definition by Pius IX; the words uttered by Mary confirm the sentence pronounced by His infallible authority. And finally, they are attributable to the fact that the most Blessed Virgin reveals by this language how dear to herself is this definition, which has excited such transports of joy throughout the church, since the definition converts the defined truth into a title, which she intends to bear henceforth, in the church militant, until the end of time.

The dogmatic definition by Pius IX, is therefore the

prelude to these stupendous results; and it was necessary that it should precede the words of the Blessed Virgin: "I am the Immaculate Conception."

There is also a fundamental reason why the definition must of necessity precede those words. The most Blessed Virgin, notwithstanding her ineffable dignity as mother of God, does not possess the authority for teaching in the church. This authority is vested solely in him, to whom her divine Son has said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, that is to say, the people and the bishops, the universal church." In consequence of not possessing authority for teaching, the most Blessed Virgin could not have said to the world, "I am the Immaculate Conception," in the sense of her language being understood as the definition of a dogma, belief in which would have been obligatory; the power of defining a dogma, and of imposing it as an article of faith upon the whole church being the exclusive tribute and prerogative of the Roman Pontiff.—Thus it was, that the most Blessed Virgin could say to the church, "I am the Immaculate Conception," only after the dogmatic definition had been promulgated by Pius IX.

Such is the doctrine of the church, which the modern Hilary of Poitiers, on the day of the coronation of the immaculate Virgin by Pius IX, explained in the following terms to an assemblage of over one hundred thousand catholics:

"Yes! all christendom, and heaven in unison with the earth, are about to proclaim Mary blessed, at the

moment, when Pius IX, through the ministry of his venerable delegate, will, on this day, add the crowning lustre to the definition promulgated by himself, by crowning the representation of her, who, on this very spot, named and declared herself the 'Immaculate Conception.' It is true, O Mary, that thou wast only able to say this to the world, after the Vicar of thy Son had said it to the church; but, as a response to the oracle of the Vatican, the oracle of Lourdes was hailed with enthusiasm by all who are jealously solicitous of thy glory as well as of the prerogatives of the Roman Pontificate." (1)

(1) Revelationes privatæ per se non pertinent ad depositi fidei catholicæ explicationem promovendam, ad quam Christus Dominus ministerium ordinarium in visibili capite Ecclesiæ, ut principio et fundamento unitatis fidei, et in successione apostolica capiti unita, instituit sub promissione infallibilis assistentiæ, non autem, sub directione per novas revelationes. Hinc est quod inter rationes ob quas privatæ revelationes suspectæ videri possent, juxta Benedictum XIV (De canonis. Sanct., I. III, c. 53, no. 8), recensetur illa "si revelatum dicatur quod adhuc sit sub judicio Ecclesiæ," J.-B. Franzelin, Tract. de divina Revelatione, sect. IV, p. 235.

CHAPTER XXV.

April 5th, 1858—Easter Monday—the most Blessed Virgin appears to Bernadette—Prodigy occurring whilst she is in ecstasy: the flame of the taper passes between her fingers without burning them.—Nearly ten thousand persons gathered around the Grotto.

The apparition on the 25th of March had produced the deepest sensation throughout the Pyrenees. The most Blessed Virgin had declared her name to Bernadette. She had said to her: "I am the Immaculate Conception." The surrounding catholic population, so deeply imbued with faith, experiences a thrill of joy and utters one universal triumphal cry: "We had said that it was the most Blessed Virgin! It is then true, that the immaculate Virgin, the Virgin conceived without sin, the most holy mother of God has condescended to appear among our mountains! In calling herself the Immaculate Conception, she herself comes to confirm what Pius IX has defined as a dogma of faith. She remembers how joyfully we welcomed that definition, and the festivals we celebrated in her honor. She loves us—she wishes to dwell in our midst. This Grotto is the sanctuary in which she desires to impart to us her blessings. We will repair thither to venerate her, to pray to her, to invoke her, to bless her. We and our children will go and place ourselves under her protec-

tion; we will consecrate ourselves to her, and we will also dedicate to her our posterity. May she who is the Immaculate Conception reign over us forever! She desires a church: she shall have one! She wishes processions: by every mountain path we will come to her, chanting her praises. The mountaineers of the Pyrenees will lead the van of the pilgrimage; France will come next, and then the other nations of the earth will join the ranks."

This being the mood of the people, it is not surprising that, on Easter Monday, there were more than ten thousand persons in the neighborhood of the Grotto, who had come not from Lourdes alone but also from different sections of the Pyrenees.

Bernadette was attracted to the spot by that same sweet and irresistible impulse which she had experienced on the occasion of the very first apparition; but these catholic souls were also called there by an interior movement of the Holy Ghost.

The characteristics of the vision on the 5th of April, Easter Monday, were entirely novel. Henceforth, Bernadette knew that she, who had appeared to her, and whom she was to contemplate again, was the immaculate Virgin, the most holy mother of God, and the ten thousand witnesses present were also aware of that same fact.

The queen of heaven wishes that the holy joy attendant upon the Feast of Easter should be increased in these people, whose faith is so lively. She will, in response to their expectations and their desire, not only show herself to Bernadette, whom she will behold in a

state of ecstasy; but, during this apparition, she will also perform a most striking and impressive miracle, the memory of which will be indelible.

By means of this prodigy, the immaculate Virgin confirms anew the truth and the reality of her apparitions.

Bernadette, whose coming is looked for with the most intense anxiety, appears at last, on the path which winds along the bank of the Gave. Never was she greeted with more respect. The ardent faith of these christians discovers and venerates the confidant and the dearly beloved child of the queen of heaven, in the person of this little girl, so humbly and poorly clad, who advances towards them with such candor and modesty, and at the same time, with such confidence and assurance.

She reaches the Grotto: she is in presence of that throne of clemency which the immaculate Virgin has chosen for herself. It can safely be said, that at this moment the souls of all present are united to her own; the ten thousand witnesses, on bended knees, join her in prayer.

Bernadette, kneeling as usual, holds in her hands a large lighted taper, which she rests upon the ground. Whilst in this position, she suddenly sees the wonderful light shine, and the immaculate Virgin appears to her. She at once goes into ecstasy; she is transfigured, and the interior colloquy, between her soul and the queen of heaven, begins.

The ecstasy seems more intense than before. Bernadette resembles an angel more than ever. A ray of

the sovereign beauty of the immaculate Virgin is reflected upon her forehead and over her features. The cry is heard: *She is in ecstasy! The most Holy Virgin is appearing to her!* And this cry spreads from rank to rank, throughout the immense assembly. The fervor of her prayer increases. The immaculate Virgin makes her presence experienced and causes the sweetness of her blessings to be felt by the souls which surround Bernadette.

The prodigy which the most Blessed Virgin has in store to reward the faith of these people is soon to be disclosed. Whilst in ecstasy, not by an irreflective motion, but because the queen of heaven so wills it, in order that her power may be displayed, Bernadette raises her hands towards the upper portion of the taper, so that the flame plays between her fingers, which are slightly separated. At this sight, a thrill of terror runs through the crowd; but whilst the flame ascends between her virginal fingers, Bernadette remains motionless; her gaze is riveted upon that indescribable beauty of the Virgin without stain, which is destined to entrance forever the entire court of heaven. The prodigy lasts for more than a quarter of an hour.—"A miracle!" cry out those who see the fact with their own eyes. One hundred and fifty persons are able to draw sufficiently near to be witnesses of this great prodigy. In an instant, the miraculous event is communicated to the entire multitude who, in their turn, cry out: "A miracle!"

What devout prayers, what invocations are not then exhaled from the hearts of all present, and wafted

towards the immaculate Virgin! and what a consummation of the Feast of Easter for all these fervent catholics!

But what is it that occurs between Bernadette and the immaculate Virgin during this ecstasy, which is attended by so extraordinary a prodigy? What are they saying, in this conversation without words, to use the expression of Saint Theresa?

Let us penetrate this mystery as far as our weakness will permit.

Not only does the mother of God keep Bernadette's soul in a state of ecstasy, and give her a foretaste of heaven, by revealing herself unto her in the splendor of her unutterable beauty, and by pouring into her heart, a drop of the torrent of divine delights, but she also enlightens her with a supernatural light. She is, in the language of the church, the radiant palace of the light uncreated: *Aula Lucis fulgida.* She therefore causes this dearly beloved soul to be penetrated by a ray of that light, of which she is the living focus. And this one ray is sufficient to enable Bernadette to form a lofty estimate of the value of divine grace, of God, of Jesus Christ, of His most holy mother, of His church, and to perceive the nothingness of all that is not God, His grace and His holy love.

By means of this ray of light, she communicates to Bernadette a new and deep insight into the secrets with which she has been entrusted. As she is the abode of the Holy Ghost, so is she His organ in communicating these secrets. Bernadette appreciates their sovereign wisdom, and feels an invincible ability

to preserve them forever in her heart, and to regulate her conduct in conformity with their import.

Whilst, however, the immaculate Virgin is communicating to Bernadette, by means of this ray, such brilliant lights, she is pouring out, at the same time, into her soul, an effusion of sanctifying grace which elevates it before God, and increases the fires of charity in the child. The Blessed Virgin thus rewards Bernadette for her fidelity and her courage, for she was not merely her messenger and her embassadress, but also her witness, whom it was impossible to confuse; this witness has already suffered persecution for her sake, and she is prepared to undergo new trials.

On the other hand, her pure and innocent heart offers no impediment to the gifts of grace. Thus, during this ecstasy, the immaculate Virgin may treat her, and is indeed pleased to treat her with the tenderness of a mother, and with the munificence of the queen of heaven. She enriches her soul with additional treasures; and she causes sparks to fall from the immaculate firebrand of her own heart into that of the child in order that these may burn therein during unending ages; for Bernadette's name is already written in the book of life; the immaculate Virgin revealed this herself, when she said to her:

"I promise to make you happy, not in this world, but in the next."

The seventeenth apparition, and the fifteenth and last occasion upon which the immaculate Virgin condescended to reveal herself in presence of multitudes, occurred on this beautiful fifth day of April—Easter Monday.

She had said to Bernadette, at the third apparition, on the 18th of February: "Will you do me the favor of coming here for a fortnight; I wish to see people here."

The child had obeyed.

The immaculate Virgin, in order to reward the fidelity of Bernadette, and the faith of the assembled throng, resolves to crown the last day of this memorable fortnight by a most astonishing prodigy, in which she asserts both her sovereign power and her maternal love.

She seems to say to her dear and faithful Bernadette: "The flame of this taper has not scorched your hands; know by this, that no worldly flame will have power to injure your soul; you are in my keeping."

But she says, at the same time, to these fervent catholics who surround her, and through them, to all the children of the church: "As I have preserved the hands of this child from the effects of the flame of the taper, so will I preserve the souls of those who serve my Son faithfully, and who serve me also, from the dangers of worldly flames; they are in my keeping."

The prodigy which occurred on the 5th of April, the words spoken on the 25th of March: "I am the Immaculate Conception," the miraculous cures, which are multiplied daily, create an extraordinary sensation throughout France and distant lands. A general impulse is visible among catholics. They come to the sanctuary of Lourdes from different parts of France and Europe, and their presence, as well as their homages, afford the proof that it is really the queen

of heaven, the sovereign of the world, the mother of God and of men, the most Holy Virgin, the immaculate Virgin, who uttered the words: "I wish to see people, at this spot."

At the present day, all christendom hearkens to her desire.

CHAPTER XXVI.

June 3d, 1858.—Feast of the Blessed Sacrament.—Bernadette makes her first communion in the Chapel of the Hospital at Lourdes.

The reader was perhaps astonished, at first, to learn that Bernadette, who, on the 7th of January, 1858, had entered her fifteenth year, had not as yet made her first communion. A moment's reflection, however, will suffice to show that this was one of the circumstances which formed part of the plan conceived by divine wisdom.

God, in order to establish this pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes, makes use of what is most feeble in the world—a child, so as to demonstrate that its foundation is entirely the work of His own omnipotence. In this child, He desires only innocence, simplicity, candor; therefore He allows Bernadette to remain delicate, small in size, no larger apparently than a child of eleven or twelve years, although she is in reality over fourteen; she can neither read nor write, and she speaks only the dialect in use in the mountains. Had she made her first communion at Bartrès, she would have acquired a certain degree of culture and maturity from the study of christian doctrine. God wishes in her neither this culture nor this maturity, which, in a human point of view, might have lent some authority

to her words. He wishes her to be profoundly ignorant of every thing; He selects her purposely from the very humblest class of society, so that she may be of no consequence in the eyes of the world. Then, if this angelic creature, who has on her side only innocence and candor, speak, with superhuman wisdom, of the apparitions of the immaculate Virgin; if she remain unmoved and unconquerable in the midst of the persecution raised against her; if she sustain the struggle singlehanded—for as it has been seen, the holy bishop of the Pyrenees, together with his clergy, has imposed upon himself the obligation of waiting and of not intervening; if prodigies confirm her assertions; if, upon her testimony, the people of the adjacent country flock to the Grotto with all the impulse which faith inspires; if, in a word, the pilgrimage be established, it will be clearly evident that this work is the work of Divine Omnipotence.

It will now be understood why Bernadette has not yet made her first communion, and how this delay is a secret of the wisdom of God. And the fact, too, that Bernadette has to forego the happiness of making her first communion until the time, when her mission will have been fulfilled, is on the part of God, the greatest proof of love that He can give her, for it is ordaining the advent of this solemn act by a preparation unparalleled in this country and the annals of the church.

God had indeed prepared Bernadette's heart, from her most tender childhood, for the grace of this important day. He had Himself been the teacher and the guide of the little girl. The most Holy Virgin, to whom

He had confided her from infancy, protected her and entertained for her the affection of a mother. Thus the heart of Bernadette, favored by the visits from God and the immaculate Virgin, had never ceased being fortified by grace and love. The life she had led, up to this time, was the remote preparation for her first communion. The apparitions of the most Blessed Virgin were to serve as a more immediate preparation.

The eye of God alone can measure the increase of grace and love which obtained in the heart of Bernadette during these intimate communications with the queen of heaven.

Speaking of these supernatural visions, Saint Theresa tells us that one single visit of this kind produces more spiritual good in a soul, than several years of ordinary prayer. And the most Blessed Virgin appeared to Bernadette eighteen times, as we have seen. She, the mother of holy love and the channel through which all graces flow, how pleased she is to infuse into the candid soul of this child, at each apparition, the treasures of celestial grace! In selecting her as her confidant, as her embassadress, as her witness, and, so to speak, as a martyr in her cause, she elevates her soul to the altitude required by a mission so highly privileged.—The facts that Bernadette neither knows how to read nor write, and that she is entirely wanting in worldly erudition, are no obstacles to the supernatural gifts of grace. The science of divine love is sovereignly independent of human science. The most unlettered man, says Saint Bonaventure, can love God as much as the greatest doctor in the world. And to what regions of

divine love did the most Blessed Virgin ravish the soul of Bernadette at each apparition! What lights and what ardor did she communicate to her! Who can tell?

Bernadette had accomplished her mission faithfully; she had delivered the messages of the most Blessed Virgin; she had borne the brunt of persecution; she had uttered this sublime sentence: "You may put me in prison, but what I have said is the truth." Not only had she despised threats, but her soul had been filled with joy at the prospect of being imprisoned for Jesus Christ and His most holy mother. Money had been offered to her as well as advantages in a human point of view. With Saint Paul, she had considered all this as nothing, when compared with the acquisition of Jesus Christ. She had shown in how exalted a degree she possessed the knowledge of Him, who, being unboundedly wealthy in heaven, had made Himself poor for love of us. True daughter and true spouse of the God of Bethlehem, rags were for her the most regal attire, and she had preserved spotless the nobility of poverty.

On the occasion of the third apparition, the most Blessed Virgin had revealed to her the fact of her being numbered among the elect, by the promise she made her of happiness in the next life, but not in this. What must have been the transports of joy which this promise of the mother of God excited in the soul of Bernadette! This assurance was ever present to her mind; her soul constantly overflowed with gratitude and love. How great were the acts she made of love of God!— And what was the preparation, which her soul under-

went, through these acts, towards the reception of the God of love Himself!

It is therefore through deep design of His wisdom that He caused to be delayed, for Bernadette, the advent of the beautiful day of her first communion! He wished that the most Blessed Virgin, by means of this series of apparitions, should herself prepare and embellish at her own discretion during four months, the sanctuary of her soul.

The divine Master selects as the day upon which she is to approach the holy table, that festival which transcends all others, the feast of the Blessed Sacrament. On the 3d day of June, in the year of grace 1858, on which His body is adored in a special manner throughout the world, and on which, borne in triumph in the entire christian universe, He showers profusely His graces, His blessings, His favors; He deigns to descend for the first time into Bernadette's heart, which He consecrates to Himself as a cherished sanctuary in which He will abide forever.

But, as He has always led Bernadette through the pathway of humility, and as He wishes that this virtue should be resplendent in her during the whole course of her life, the adorable Master singles out the dwelling place of the poor, the humble chapel of the hospital of Lourdes, as the spot where He is to give Himself, the bread of life, to this chosen and privileged soul.

The most Holy Virgin, who had so often bent down over her dear Bernadette, who had smiled upon her so frequently, who had entrusted, to her, her secrets, who

had revealed to her the fact of her eternal predestination, could not do otherwise than present her, herself, to her divine Son, on this day; and something similar to what happened between Saint Catherine of Sienna and the divine Master, when He gave her the betrothal ring, must have then occurred. The inhabitants of heaven must have looked with complacency upon this humble girl, at the moment when Jesus Christ placed upon her finger the nuptial ring belonging to virgins.

As to Bernadette, she concealed beneath a simple and modest exterior the great things which God was operating in her. She enjoyed heaven in her heart—a few drops of the torrent of eternal felicity which fell into the most hidden recesses of her soul sufficed to ravish her into an ecstasy of happiness.

The public apparitions of the most Blessed Virgin were henceforth to be discontinued. She was only to appear to Bernadette once more, on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the 16th of July following.—A new era of divine delights was however to be inaugurated for her soul. The Spouse of Virgins was to take the place of the public apparitions of Mary, His divine mother, by the gift of His entire Self to His humble servant in the eucharistic banquet. Holy communion was to be her new life, and the prelude of the divine union in heaven. Each communion was to draw closer the already intimate relations by which she was bound to her divine Spouse. How great must have been the assurance, based upon the promise of the most Blessed Virgin, with which Bernadette could say:—"Who can ever separate me from Jesus Christ?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

July 16th, 1858.—Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, eighteenth and last apparition of the Immaculate Virgin to Bernadette.—Prodigy attending this apparition.

The persecution was still raging; most peremptory orders of the Prefect of the Department were issued, prohibiting access to the Grotto and the Massabielle rocks.

What can human will effect, however, when it is in opposition to that of the Almighty?

The festival of Our Lady of Mount Carmel had just been celebrated throughout the catholic world. The immaculate Virgin who had poured out, over all the peoples of the earth, treasures of grace and blessings, wished to select the evening of this beautiful day to appear to her dear and faithful Bernadette, no longer in presence of multitudes, but this time, before only a few chosen witnesses.

Bernadette feeling the interior call from the queen of heaven, whose significance she so well knew, announces the fact to her parents. Her youngest aunt volunteers to escort her. Two ladies at Lourdes, who had expressed a great desire of one day accompanying Bernadette, in the hope of seeing her in ecstasy, are notified, and all four set out together.

The path usually followed, which wound along the left bank, being closed by order of the Prefect, they take the right bank of the Gave, and reach the spot opposite the Grotto. At this place, there is a large prairie spread out at the base of the hill. As this prairie is not included in the Prefect's prohibition, the people can assemble here to pray, and offer, with entire freedom, their homages to the immaculate Virgin.

Eight o'clock had struck before their arrival. Several groups of persons, praying recollectedly and fervently, were scattered over the prairie. As it was twilight, Bernadette, surrounded by her companions, was not recognized as she passed by. They select an unfrequented spot, kneel down opposite the Grotto, and begin to say their beads. It is not long before the most holy mother of God appears to her humble confidant, who is transfigured and remains in an ecstatic posture in presence of her three companions, who contemplate her at their leisure. During the last apparition, on the 5th of April, Easter Monday, a miracle had taken place: the flame of the taper had played between the scarcely parted fingers of the child, without burning them. To-day, a fresh miracle attends the apparition. Bernadette is at some distance from the Grotto, from which she is separated by the breadth of the Gave and by the space extending from the bank of the stream to the spot on the prairie where she is kneeling, in ecstasy. By an effect of the omnipotence of God, distances vanish; the Grotto, drawing nearer, becomes, as it were, immediately before the eyes of Bernadette, who finds herself in her accustomed posi-

tion: she is kneeling opposite the niche hollowed out of the rock, and from this place she beholds the queen of heaven in her glory. Her features and her gaze reveal the tenderness of her heart. During this apparition, how great are the marvels wrought by the most Blessed Virgin in Bernadette's soul! How bright the light with which it is flooded, and at the same time how burning the flames with which it is consumed!— By her motherly smile, she points out to her the extent of her love. She shows her satisfaction for the fidelity with which Bernadette has executed all the commands which had been given her. She stretches forth her hands and blesses her. By her gaze, which lingers long upon her, the immaculate Virgin imparts angelic purity to her soul; imprints upon her brow the symbol of victory; fortifies and endows her with supernatural strength, which will make her triumph over the devil and over the world.

" After giving these sovereign proofs of her protection and love, the immaculate Virgin disappears from Bernadette's sight.

This vision was the last which Bernadette was to have in presence of witnesses.

There is a mysterious circumstance connected with the fact, that the most Blessed Virgin appears on the festival of Our Lady of Mount Carmel; that she crosses the Gave, and manifests herself on the right bank, the opposite shore of that stream. She blesses this piece of land, of which she takes possession on behalf of the Carmelite virgins; by her presence, she sanctifies this prairie and the slope of the hill, where it is her wish

that the seraphic Theresa of Jesus shall have a monastery, which will be erected opposite to the miraculous Grotto and the basilica which rears its magnificent proportions like a crown over the Grotto itself.

Thus, this date, July 16th, feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and the apparition on the right bank of the Gave were prophetic: what was foretold has met with its accomplishment: the Carmelite convent has been built.

Saint Theresa occupies the post of honor at Lourdes. The monastery, inhabited by her daughters, stands on about the same level as the basilica, which is directly opposite; it commands an uninterrupted view of the miraculous Grotto. The Gave, which has been walled in at this spot, flows peacefully past these two sanctuaries. It is a touching symbol of the stream of divine mercies!

This apparition of the 16th of July, of which three persons only were witnesses, was, as it were, reserved for Bernadette alone. The apparition on Easter Monday, April 5th, was the last with which she was to be favored in the presence of multitudes. Twenty years have elapsed since then, and history does not make mention of one single apparition more.

This statement, however, should not be taken to imply that the most Blessed Virgin has ceased to appear to Bernadette in private, and without witnesses. And the reserve maintained by Bernadette concerning such special apparitions is no proof of their non-occurrence, because silence, in this regard, may have been enjoined upon her, either as one of the three secrets confided to

her by the most Holy Virgin, or in the shape of a new command. If such were the case, the divine mother might repeatedly appear to Bernadette without any intimation of this fact being brought to the notice of the world.

But, even if Bernadette should not be favored with private apparitions, it would not be safe to conclude that once the favor at an end, these public apparitions have lost their influence over her soul. This would indeed be committing a strange mistake.

The masters of spiritual life, and especially those saints who have received favors similar to those we have just described, and who therefore speak from experience, affirm that apparitions of so elevated an order leave an indelible memory and, as it were, a living impress upon the soul. And as, on the other hand, such great favors bring about, in the soul, a complete separation from all creatures, and the world of sense, it follows, that the soul, dwelling in its interior fastnesses, turns its attention, with the greatest ease, upon the object which it has beheld in apparitions. By means of memory, it is still able to recall its beauty, and although the memories thus evoked do not cause it to fall into ecstasy, still they do not fail in the production of most precious effects, renewing to a certain extent, the delights it has enjoyed, the lights with which it has been flooded, and all the sentiments with which it used to be filled, during the time of ecstasy.

Bernadette's life will afford proof of these happy effects. We shall see, in the second part of this work

that she has never faltered whilst fulfilling her noble and holy mission.

The narration of the apparitions of the immaculate Virgin to Bernadette in the Grotto of Lourdes in presence of multitudes is therefore terminated.

Besides these extraordinary apparitions however, which are the privilege of souls for which God reserves some great mission in the church, there is, fortunately for us, another kind of apparitions of the most Blessed Virgin: apparitions by faith. By this term, we designate a thorough meditation, a study by faith, touching the holiness and the grandeurs of the mother of God. It is always within our power to enjoy this last kind of apparitions; the others however pass away and are independent of our control.

In extraordinary apparitions of the Virgin, that which enraptures the saints and Bernadette, is an exterior reflection of the interior beauty of the mother of God.

In apparitions by faith however, it is not this reflection which we contemplate, but the interior beauty itself.

It is this interior beauty which constitutes the real grandeur of the most Blessed Virgin, according to the language of David:—"All the glory of the King's daughter is within:—*Omnis gloria Filiæ Regis ab intus.*" (1)

The saints, the doctors of the church, and theologians have discoursed admirably concerning this interior beauty of the mother of God. We have there-

(1) Ps. xliv. 14.

fore thought that we could render no greater service to the christian reader than to introduce him to their teachings, making him assist at some of their lessons upon the sanctity and the grandeurs of the queen of heaven: we will do this in the following chapters, which will conclude the first part of this work.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONSIDERATION

Of the growth and immensity of the graces and merits of the Blessed Virgin.

This divine Virgin, as Pius IX has told us in the dogmatic bull concerning the Immaculate Conception is "an ineffable miracle, the master piece of miracles, and the worthy mother of God." She is, after God, and after Christ the God-man, all that is greatest and most holy. The seraphic doctor calls her, "a celestial prodigy and the most sacred spectacle which exists in creation: *Cœleste prodiguim, et sacratissimum spectaculum.*" Next to God and Christ, she offers the most elevated and ravishing subject for contemplation to the minds of angels and men.

It is written, and the language is applied to this divine Virgin: "They that explain me shall have life everlasting. *Qui elucidant me, vitam æternam habebunt.*" (1.) In order to belong to this chosen number, let us explain, by faith, the growth and immensity of the grace and merits of the most holy mother of God. Here again, as we have just said, we will have as our guides and masters the greatest saints, the most eminent doctors, and the most learned theologians of the church.

(1) Eccl xxiv, 31.

And in the first place, what is the law of growth in grace and merits which obtains not only for the most Blessed Virgin, but for heavenly spirits and the saints as well?

Suarez formulates this law in the following terms: "It is the sentiment of all theologians, that acts formed by charity are deserving of an increase of that same charity, and consequently of grace and glory; exactly equal to the charity which is in the soul and which produces the act. So, that if for instance, the act be equivalent to four degrees, it deserves four degrees of increase of grace, and the same obtains for the remainder. To say the truth, it is not every meritorious act which has the power of increasing grace in this proportion, but only very perfect acts of love of God. These acts being by their nature, the most noble, are thereby the most efficacious for merit and for the increase of the same charity alluded to above."

Such is the law of the growth or increase of grace and merits. Now, what is the starting point of the merits of the most Blessed Virgin? In other words, what is the measure, the intensity of the grace which dwells within her from the very instant of her Immaculate Conception.

This measure in the very plenitude of all graces, according to the doctrine of Saint Thomas and of the fathers of the church, "the grace which is partially given to others," says Saint Jerome, "has diffused itself, with its entire abundance, in Mary."

"This grace is so copious," writes Saint Vincent Ferrier, "that it exceeds the collective grace of all the

saints and of all the heavenly spirits. *Virgo sanctificata fuit in utero super omnes sanctos et angelos.*"

Besides, this plenitude of grace which was lavished upon Mary, from the very first instant of her Immaculate Conception, was more intense and greater than that of all the angels, and of all men taken collectively, because, as the fathers and doctors say, with reason, the foundations of the mystical dwelling which Divine Wisdom prepared for itself were laid upon the most lofty summits, that is to say, on a higher level than the most consummate sanctity of the angels and saints.

Such are the measure and the intensity of the grace enjoyed by the most Blessed Virgin in her original sanctification, and such therefore is the starting point of her merits.

Before speaking however, of her first act, let us here note a fact, which shows in a very favorable light, how far the merits of the Virgin are superior to those of the heavenly spirits. It is true, that these last received a very intense degree of grace in their original sanctification. But, Suarez says, that, according to the common opinion of theologians, merely one, or at most two acts were required of them before passing from trial to victory, before becoming consummate in grace and being admitted to the unclouded vision of God. Acting up to all the power of that intense grace which was within them, they doubled by each of these twofold acts the grace with which they were enriched; perhaps a great many of them increased that grace tenfold. It would not be at all surprising, even if Saint Michael, who led them on to battle and to

triumph, uttering the war cry, "who is there like unto God?" had multiplied a hundredfold the grace which was within him.

After these two acts however, their career of merits is at an end; their degree of glory and of happiness remains for ever ordained. Here let us note another fact, even if the most Blessed Virgin in her original sanctification, instead of the grace exceeding that of all the angels and saints taken collectively had only received a degree of grace equal to theirs, and even if she had merely been endowed with grace like unto that of the leading seraphim; in virtue of the law of increase of grace and merits, and in virtue of the fact that the heavenly spirits have had at most but two acts to perform, whilst the most Blessed Virgin had seventy-two years of life during which to multiply her own, it would follow, that at the close of her career, she would still be raised through the immensity of her merits, to an immeasurable height above the united merits of the angels and saints.

Finally, let us remark with Suarez, that the most Blessed Virgin, acting always in accord with the entire power of divine grace and impulse, was continually doubling, by each one of her acts, the grace within her soul; but very often, the intensity of her act was such, that she even went far beyond this limit, as, for instance, in the incarnation, the birth of the Saviour, and the other great mysteries. These preliminaries being once established, let us consider our divine mother entering the career of merits, and performing her first act. Where the merits of the

heavenly spirits and of the saints come to an end, there the merits of the most Blessed Virgin begin, since her foundations are laid upon the summits of the holy mountains. Oh! heavens, what a beginning! Already filled with a plenitude of grace which prepares and ordains her for the divine maternity, already rich in a more abundant and more intense grace than that enjoyed collectively by all the angels and all the saints, she is about to act with all the power inherent to that grace, illumined, besides, by a light proportionate to the importance of the grace received, and discovering in God at the very first glance, as Theodoret says, depths which will remain forever unperceived by the most exalted seraphim; seeing in herself these great things which the Almighty has wrought, without their being preceded by any act on her part; possessing and experiencing in her soul a love superior to that of all the angels and all the saints together, she raises herself toward God by an ineffable mental thrill, and she produces a first act of love, of so great intensity, that it may well be believed that it not only doubles, but that it increases ten or a hundredfold the grace which dwelt within her most holy soul. Such is the first step taken by the Blessed Virgin in the career of merits.

Such a conflagation of love being enkindled in the heart of the most Blessed Virgin, her acts succeed each other with such prodigious rapidity, that one follows another without interval or interruption. This is affirmed by Saint Bernardin of Sienna, who says, "the soul of the most Blessed Virgin was constantly and

entirely absorbed by the ardor of love: *Mens Virginis in ardore dilectionis continue tenebatur.*" And Pius IX repeats the same idea, when he tells us clearly in his dogmatic bull on the Immaculate Conception: "She was constantly augmenting the gift of grace which was imparted to her from the first moment of her being: *Donum originale jugiter augens.*" It is in this manner that she advances in the career of merits, increasing at every moment the plenitude of grace which is within her, in accordance with the law of growth of grace and merits, that is to say, by each new act, she, at least, doubles the amount of grace acquired by the act preceding, whilst very often, the ratio of increase is much greater.

It is by acts like these, whose succession is so rapid and whose intensity is always multiplied twofold, that she reaches the moment when she is to become the mother of God. Oh! heavens! what fresh augmentations of grace! When she replies to the archangel: "May it be done to one according to thy word," and when the adorable Trinity suddenly elevates her to the dignity of divine maternity, she establishes in her soul a new plenitude of grace incomparably superior to that originally existing. Until that moment, says Saint Thomas, the plenitude of grace enjoyed by this most Blessed Virgin, was simply a preliminary preparatory to divine maternity, and as such, it was sufficient; but once the mystery accomplished, this plenitude becomes not only sufficient, but overflowing, and pre-eminently excellent, and it will continue to increase until the end of her life. From the moment

of the incarnation of the Son of God, the acts of His divine mother will present a new significance, whose value will be inestimable.

This plenitude of grace, which the Virgin received in her original sanctification, says Suarez, was not absolute, like that of the ocean, which can neither expand nor contract its coasts. She merely received this plenitude as a bud or a root; she developed it, and procured its extension incessantly, through the merit of her acts. At first sufficient, then overflowing, it was only to become absolute at the moment when the mother of God would pass from this life into the beatific vision. Until then, heaven was to witness the ocean of grace contained in this most holy soul, constantly increasing its depths and ever encroaching upon its borders!

It is by means of this magnificent comparison, that the great theologian mentioned above, shows us the ineffable augmentations which occur in the grace and the merits of the most Blessed Virgin.

In the progressive motions of this ocean, however, there are times when its elevations are greater than at others: this takes place on the occasion of the great mysteries. We have just noticed this fact in connection with the Incarnation of the Word. Let us now examine into the birth of the Saviour. When the virgin-mother adores her newly born Son, when she lays Him on the straw, and presents Him to the Eternal Father, her adorations and her acts of love must be endowed with such intensity, as not only to double, but to carry far beyond, to a degree of increase known

to God alone, the grace which was within her.

When she offered Him in the temple, offering Him to God as the victim for the human race, God could not but respond to that sublime act on the part of the Virgin consenting to see her Son immolated upon the cross for the salvation of the world!

When, flying into Egypt, she carried the divine Infant, pressing Him to her heart, what must have been the new treasures of love with which the Son's heart elevated that of His mother!

During the thirty years of His hidden life, how often did it not happen, that her divine Son, disregarding, in her behalf, the ordinary laws of progress in grace, and not satisfied that His divine mother should simply double, by each of her acts, the grace which had been acquired by the act preceding, elevated her most holy soul in such a manner, that the intensity of her acts increased to prodigious proportions the grace and the divine love which were within her.

These extraordinary augmentations of grace and merits in the soul of the most Blessed Virgin occur especially during the Passion of Jesus Christ. What acts! What love! What martyrdom! She consents to offer her divine Son for the salvation of the world, and also consents to all that He is to suffer in His Passion. She follows Him every where, in spirit: in the garden, she sees His bloody sweat; she hears the words: "Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me: but yet not my will, but thine be done." (1) She sees the angel who strengthens Him in His agony.

(1) Luke, xxii, 42.

She is united with Him in all things, their hearts being as one. She accompanies Him, in spirit, before the tribunals of Annas, of Caïphas, of Herod and of Pilate. She witnesses all the outrages committed upon Him. She feels the blows aimed at His divine cheeks, as if they were struck upon her own immaculate countenance. She assists at the flagellation, in spirit; every stripe which lacerates her Son, lacerates her at the same time, such being the force of her love for Him.

Now, however, comes the moment, when no longer in spirit, but in public, she is to show herself at the Saviour's side, and to leave Him no more: this is when staggering under the weight of His cross, He goes up to Calvary. Their eyes meet, their souls are in mutual converse. The most holy mother ascends the mountain with Him; she sees Him being nailed to the cross, which is elevated in her presence. But, as Saint Ambrose expresses it, her courage is not less than that of her Son; she stands erect at His side. The gospel represents her in this attitude: *Stabat juxta crucem Mater ejus.* (1) She is crucified in her soul and in her heart, as her divine Son is, in His body. She remains thus, alongside of Him, whilst He offers Himself as a sacrifice to His Father for the salvation of the world, and she unites herself with Him in this offering.

She hears every word He utters, uniting herself to their purport. Finally she hears the last word of all: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (2)—Then she sees her Son bowing His head towards her,

(1) John, xix, 25.

(2) Luke, xxiv, 46.

and giving up the ghost! Love supplying her with miraculous strength, she remains standing by the side of the cross, with her eyes immoveably fixed upon her divine Son.

She sees the soldier who, with the lance pierces His heart. This lance does not reach the soul of her Son, but her own, which, as Saint Bernard says, could not tear itself away from that spot. In this attitude, she continues to offer her divine Son immolated for the salvation of the world, to God the Father; she does not cease offering Him to His Father, until the moment when He is to be taken down from the cross. What is it that takes place in her soul, when she sees the disciples removing the nails which had fastened His hands and feet, whose wounds she now contemplates? And how can her feelings be described, when this Sacred Body is taken down from the cross? Or when she can first embrace the wounds of the feet, then those of the hands, and finally when she folds her adorable Son within the embrace of her arms? Or, when she brings His divine head close to her own immaculate brow? Or, when she presses this inanimate body to her heart? Or, when she contemplates the countenance of the Man of Sorrows, and His forehead upon which the crown of thorns has left its bloody imprint? Now all the tortures of the Son, who has ceased to suffer, are transferred to the heart of the mother; His Passions continue in her. "O Virgin," says the church, "thy sorrow is as immense as the sea!" The sword prophesied by Simeon now pierces her soul. The love she bears her divine Son is equaled by her

grief on His account; this grief is therefore incomprehensible to created intellects. But the disciples are about to entomb the divine body; she must tear herself away from these loving embraces! After having paid the last tribute of maternity to this dearly beloved Son, she withdraws, in company with the holy women. Her whole soul is then submerged in that ocean of grief, in which it is to remain until the time comes for the resurrection of her Son. It is especially during this martyrdom, that she presents the most sacred spectacle the world has ever beheld, after that of her divine Son on the cross. She is plunged into an ecstasy of sorrow, whose intensity is equal to the greatness of her love. No, past ages had never seen, nor will future time ever contemplate a countenance bearing the marks of a sorrow so august and so holy! This spectacle is sufficient to move both heaven and earth! O holy countenance of our mother, deign to imprint this likeness so deeply into our souls and memories, that it may never be effaced!

What were, at that time and during the entire Passion, the degrees in which grace and merits were increased in this divine mother? No created intellect can form any estimate concerning this subject; the secret belongs to God alone! All that we can comprehend is that the ratio of increase was miraculous!

When the church takes in at a glance this immensity of merits acquired by the most Blessed Virgin during the Passion, when she contemplates her martyrdom and the seven swords of sorrow thrust into her soul, she is unable to restrain her emotions. The lan-

guage of her liturgy becomes sublimely elevated; her prayer is triumphant: offering to God this immensity of the merits of the Virgin she entertains no uncertainty about having her petition granted:

"O God! who art infinite mercy! grant that the tears shed by the most holy mother of Thy divine Son, may obtain for us eternal salvation, since the abundance of these tears is such, that it suffices to enable Thee to wash out the crimes of the universe!"

"NOBIS SALUTEM CONFERANT
DEIPARÆ TOT LACRYMÆ
QUIBUS LAVARE SUFFICIS
TOTIUS ORBIS CRIMINA!"

The Passion of Jesus Christ was a source of miraculous increase of grace and merits for His divine mother. The great mysteries which are to follow the Passion furnish a new and no less miraculous occasion for a similar increase.

The very moment Jesus Christ leaves the tomb, He appears to His divine mother. Through respect for the immense sorrow in which she is plunged, and for the intensity of her martyrdom, the greatest which ever existed, He brings her back to herself, only little by little, as He revealeth to Saint Theresa. Having at last entirely withdrawn her from the ocean of her grief, He fortifies her in such a manner, that she may endure the light of His glory and the mysteries He is about to operate in her, He then appears to her in all the splendor of His resurrection. In the double capacity of Son and of God, He pours out into the soul of His mother the plenitude of the joys which

inundate His own soul; and at the same time, as a reward for all that she has done for Him during His Passion, He communicates to her blessed soul a new plenitude of grace, which elevates it to an inexpressible height above itself, as a result of which, it produces acts of love of such exceeding intensity, that grace and merits increase in her soul in novel and miraculous proportions, which are still more incomprehensible than those of which an account has been given above. The love which enkindles her soul is an immense conflagration; acting with all the activity of that love, the acts of that soul are multiplied; they succeed each other with unutterable rapidity; and during all the time that the apparitions of her divine Son last, she produces those acts of love with transports of joy equaling the sorrowful pangs of her recent martyrdom. At each apparition, her divine Son is pleased to take from the infinite treasury of the Divinity, wherewith to enrich His most holy mother. In this communication of his blessings and graces, He takes counsel only of His omnipotence and of the infinite love He has for her. He is God, and He is so deeply indebted to her! Is there anything He will not do for such a mother!

On the day of His ascension, He gives His divine mother proofs of love which complete those He has just given her since leaving the sepulchre. After His last words to His dear disciples who surround His most holy mother, He rises into the air, and blesses them; but when He has already vanished from the sight of His disciples, the gaze of His divine mother is still fixed upon Him. Then casting upon her a look

in which all His love for her is depicted, He blesses her with all the blessings His heart has in store. His parting look, which expresses all His filial and divine tenderness, He leaves imprinted in her soul. And the love of the mother responding to that of the Son, new acts of unutterable intensity occur, which increase to a degree incomprehensible to finite intelligence, the grace and merits of this dearly beloved mother.

"And when the days of the pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place.....And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (1)

The flames of love concentrated in the soul of the most Blessed Virgin were again most incomprehensibly increased. The Holy Ghost who had dwelt in her soul from the moment of its creation, is pleased at the time when He fills the apostles and the nascent church, to adorn His living temple with new beauty, with a new effusion of His graces and His lights, which effusion is so rich and so prodigious, that it is known only to the Divine Spirit from whom it emanates! This affords another starting point for the most holy mother of God, in the career of merits. On this account, how great must be the new intensity of her acts of love formed during the time which elapsed between the life she led in community, as described in the sacred writings, and the moment of her assumption!

After the descent of the Holy Ghost the most Blessed Virgin has brought her mission in public to a close. Confided to the keeping of John, the dearly beloved disciple, by the Saviour Himself, she inhabits a

(1) Acts ii, 1—4.

retreat which is for her, as it were, a continuation of the community life she led after the resurrection. Whilst the apostles filled with the Holy Spirit partition out the world among themselves, she shields the rising church within her soul; and this is to be her mission until she draws her last breath.

We have now to follow her during the last years of her life, which are the most fruitful in the increase of grace and merits. How truthfully she can say at the end of each day: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me." (1) How sublime the upheavels of the ocean of grace enclosed within her soul! With what power and majesty its plenitude being constantly on the increase, it ever encroaches upon its shores!

As Suarez remarks, by a single act performed during the last years of her life, the most holy mother of God doubles at least, and frequently did more than double, the grace and the merits of her entire previous life. Thus from the highest heavens the most adorable Trinity beheld this Virgin from her forty-eighth to her seventy-second year, performing continually new acts of love, and doubling unceasingly the grace and the merits acquired by the act she had last accomplished! She ascended by the ineffable elevations of her heart to such heights of grace and glory; that no created intellect could follow her! The Almighty alone kept pace with the progression of this grace and of these merits; for His intervention occurred in each one of the meritorious acts of this divine Virgin; and through this series of acts, He contemplated making

(1) Luke i. 49.

of her for all eternity, the greatest master-piece of His power and love, after Christ. God allows this beloved Virgin to live so long upon earth, only in order that she may increase the series of these acts. The hour of recompense has, however, struck at last.

It is with difficulty that God, in His infinite tenderness for this dearly beloved Virgin, is able to set a limit to her merits, her holiness and her glory. In His love for her, He would prefer leaving her still longer upon earth, so as to exalt her still higher in heaven. It is with regret that He discovers one compensatory circumstance. There remains but one single act of love more for the most Blessed Virgin to perform. What does God do? He affords her a special, immense assistance, whose amount is known to Himself only; and the most Blessed Virgin, availing herself of the full power of the grace she already possesses, and of the force of the special and immense assistance which God extends to her, executes a supreme act of love, by which she multiplies a hundred fold, or rather in a proportion known to God alone, the immensity of the grace and of the merits acquired by the acts of her entire life in this world.

Hardly has this act of love ascended from the deeply burning fires in the heart of the Blessed Virgin, before the most Blessed Trinity suddenly raises her up to Itself, crowns her queen of heaven and earth, and gives her the position, which Its love has reserved for her from all eternity, at the right hand of her divine Son. There is to be her throne forevermore! There we are to contemplate her eternally, surrounded by an

immensity of glory equalled by the immensity of her merits!

But, neither in heaven nor on earth, will any created intellect ever be able to comprehend the immensity of this grace and glory. Saint Bernardin of Sienna has truly said, that: "*The knowledge of the Virgin is reserved to God alone.*"

Pius IX himself confirms and proclaims this truth in the Bull relating to the Immaculate Conception;—let us listen to his language concerning the divine Virgin:

"Wherefore, far before all the angelic spirits and all the saints, God so wonderfully endowed her with the abundance of all the heavenly gifts drawn from the treasure of divinity, that she might be ever free from every stain of sin, and all fair and perfect, and might possess that plenitude of innocence and holiness, than which, under God, none is greater, and which, except God, no one can reach even in thought: *Eam innocentiæ et sanctitatis plenitudinem præ se ferret, qua major sub Deo nullatenus intelligitur, et quam præter Deum, nemo assequi cogitando potest.*"

O most Blessed Trinity, O heart of Jesus, associating ourselves during this our exile to the hosts of heavenly spirits and to all the saints, we desire to bless Thee, with them, for the immensity of grace and glory enjoyed by our divine mother.

We raise towards Thee, we offer Thee all the acts of love performed by her immaculate heart, from the moment of her conception to that of her assumption. We present Thee, separately, each one of these acts, with

its entire ardor and intensity; we then present them to Thee collectively, with all their collective ardor and intensity. Not satisfied with offering them to Thee once, we do so, countless millions of times, from every point of space, during time and eternity. And finally, we will perpetually raise towards Thee this immensity of grace and glory of our divine mother, which we will unceasingly offer Thee even to the most remote confines of that eternity, eternally without limits.

And thou, O most Holy Virgin, most happy mother of the Saviour, who holdest in thy keeping all the treasures of heaven, who art all-powerful with thy divine Son, and who art our mother, obtain for us the favor of contemplating, one day, in the light of heaven, that immensity of thy merits and of thy glory which, even now, it is so sweet for us to contemplate in the light of faith.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ANOTHER VIEW

Of the immensity of the grace enjoyed by the most Blessed Virgin, according to the testimony of the Fathers, the Doctors and the Saints.

This second meditation upon the immensity of grace in the Virgin is the work of the fathers, the doctors, and the saints. The unanimous character of their testimony, concerning the mother of God, is admirable. They were the organs of the Holy Ghost; they have taught the world in the most faithful and heavenly language all that human understanding, enlightened by faith, could demonstrate. Their testimony is our surest guide, our most precious treasure. Besides light, it also conceals latent fire. When we read it, we are flooded with light and enveloped by flames. From the highest heavens these favorites of the Almighty act simultaneously upon our souls, both by their expressions and by the graces which they obtain for us whilst we read. As, in their capacity of princes of the celestial court, they possess great influence, and as, on the other hand they see, reflected in the mirror of divine essence, those who peruse their writings, they intercede for their readers, in order that the light and the fire contained in their productions may be diffused into

the souls given up to studies of this nature. What they tell us concerning the Virgin is an inexhaustible mine of holy meditations sufficient to last a lifetime. Divinely faithful artists, they paint her for us, in her unutterable interior beauty; they make us know her; and by this very fact, they stamp us with the sign of our eternal election to glory.

But, as there are so many christians in the different ranks of society, so many virgins consecrated to God, so many missionaries who have neither the leisure nor the means to read these texts scattered throughout the pages of voluminous works, we collect them, in this place, in order that the thoughts of these masters may always be within their reach.

This is the manner in which they express themselves concerning the immensity of grace which the most Blessed Virgin had attained, at the close of her life.

Saint John Damascene, in his second discourse upon the Assumption, calls the Virgin "an abyss of grace: *Gratiæ abyssum.*"

Saint Epiphanus, in his remarks on the glories of the Virgin, expresses himself as follows: "The grace of the most Blessed Virgin is immense: *Gratia sanctæ Virginis est immensa.*" Further on, he calls her "A spiritual sea possessing Christ the heavenly pearl:— *Mare spirituale habens gemmam cælestem, Christum.*"— Finally, in the same address, he says: "God alone excepted, thou art superior to all; neither the tongue of angels, nor that of men, is able to praise thee worthily: *Solo Deo excepto, cunctis superior existis, cui prædicandæ, neque hominum neque angelorum lingua sufficit.*"

Saint Anselm (1) says: "No one, either among men or among the angels can fathom the immensity of the love of God towards the Virgin;" he continues, "the grace and the exaltation of this woman, are something ineffable, which causes astonishment throughout endless generations: *Nullus hominum vel angelorum penetrare potest immensitatem divini amoris erga Virginem. Ineffabilis est, et stupenda omni sæculo hujus mulieris gratia et exultatio.*" And he concludes the eighth chapter thus: "What more can I say, O divine sovereign? When I begin to consider the immensity of thy grace, of thy glory, and of thy happiness, my mind is unequal to the task, and my tongue becomes dumb: *Quid amplius dicere possum, Domina? immensitatem quippe gratiæ, et gloriæ, et felicitatis tuæ considerare incipienti, et sensus deficit, et lingua fatiscit.*"

Saint Bernard, in his fourth discourse on the Assumption, applies the term "unspeakable" to the privilege of the merits of the most Blessed Virgin.

Saint Bernardin of Sienna, in his fifty-first discourse, affirms that "the perfection of the Virgin is so great, that knowledge of it is reserved to God alone: *Ut soli Deo cognoscenda reservetur.*"

Saint Andrew of Crete, in his sermon on the happy death of the Virgin, among the many other praises which he lavishes upon the mother of God, is pleased to proclaim her, "the most holy treasure of all sanctity: *Omnis sanctitatis sanctissimum thesaurum.*"

Saint Ephrem, in his discourse on the glories of the Virgin says, among other things: "Thou art more holy

(1) De Excellentia Virg., c. iii.

than the cherubim; thou art more holy than the seraphim; and thou art incomparably more exalted in glory than all the other heavenly hosts: *Sanctior cherubim, sanctior seraphim, et nulla comparatione cæteris omnibus superis exercitibus gloriosior.*"

Saint Bonaventure writes as follows in the fifth chapter of his *Mirror of Mary*: "The grace, with which the divine Virgin was filled, was certainly immense: *Immensa certe fuit gratia, qua ipsa fuit plena.*" Finally, the seraphic doctor calls the Virgin "a celestial prodigy and a most sacred spectacle: *Cœleste prodigium, et sacratissimum spectaculum.*" By these magnificent expressions he points out clearly the immensity of grace with which the Virgin was endowed.

The fathers, the doctors and the saints use the same elevated language in speaking of the immense superiority of the grace enjoyed by the most Blessed Virgin over the collective grace of all the saints and heavenly spirits united. In fact, it is impossible for them to employ terms more chosen, in this connection.

Saint Andrew of Crete, in his sermon on the mother of God, says, "that the Virgin's condition of glory being so elevated and so prodigious as to be beyond the grasp of human intelligence, it must be honored by silence: *Ut quia nec discerni possit, honoretur silentio.*"

He goes on: "O, Virgin, who hast a title, to which no other can be compared, and who, after God, art more elevated than all creatures: *Quæ habes cum aliis non comparabilem appellationem, quæ, excepto Deo solo, es omnibus altior.*"

Finally, he concludes in this magnificent strain: "O holy one, holier than the Saints, and most holy treasure of all sanctity! *O Sancta, et sanctis sanctior, et omnis sanctitatis sanctissimus thesaurus!*"

Saint Peter Damien, in his discourse on the Assumption, expresses himself as follows: "The Virgin elevated above the souls of the saints and angelic choirs, and being exalted to a great height above them, surpasses the merits of each, and the combined merits of all: *Virgo, inter animas sanctorum et angelorum choros supereminens, et erecta, merita singulorum, et omnium titulos antecedit.*" And in the same discourse, he says that the Virgin exceeds the other saints in grace, as much as the brilliancy and light of the sun transcend those of the star; and finally, speaking of this divine Virgin, he utters these words: "In this inaccessible light emitting an incomparable splendor, she possessed to such a degree, the dignity of the saints and the celestial spirits, that they are, as though they do not exist, and that, in comparison with this divine Virgin, they neither can nor must appear: *In illa inaccessibili luce perlucens, sic utrorumque spirituum habebat dignitatem, ut sint quasi non sint, et in comparatione illius nec possint nec debeant apparere.*"

In his remarks on the nativity of the Virgin he says: "Who can there be greater than the Virgin Mary, who has enclosed the grandeur of divine sovereignty in the mystery accomplished within her holy womb? Contemplate the seraphim, and you will see that what is greatest is less than the Virgin, and that the divine Artisan alone surpasses this masterpiece: *Quid grand-*

ius Virgine Maria, quæ magnitudinem summæ Divinitatis intra sui ventris conclusit arcanum? Attende seraphim, et videbis quidquid majus est, minus Virgine, solumque Opificem opus istud supergredi."

This great doctor adds: "The glory which awaited the Blessed Virgin at her departure from this world is ignorant of its inception, and knows not its end; and we can only repeat the words 'Glorious things have been told us of thee, O glory of God:' *Gloria quæ eam ex hoc mundo transeuntem excipit, principium ignorat, nescit finem, de qua nihil aliud possumus dicere nisi quia gloriosa dicta sunt de te, Gloria Dei.*"

Finally, in his discourse on the Annunciation, he makes use of the following language: "Such is the Virgin, in whom the Lord, who is God in His essence established Himself with all His sweetness. This great God, who has wrought all His works excellently well, has endowed this one with a perfection still more excellent, preparing and consecrating for Himself, in the Virgin, a tabernacle of gold, for the reconciliation of the world: *Hæc est, in quam dulcis Dominus cum omni sua dulcedine supervenit. Cum enim fecerit, Deus omnia opera sua valde bona, hoc melius fecit consecrans sibi in ea reconciliatorium aureum.*"

Saint John Damascene, speaking of the happy death of the Virgin, says: "The difference is infinite between the mother of God and the servants of God: *Dei Matris, et servorum Dei, infinitum est discrimen.*"

Saint Chrysostom, in the discourse which the church has adopted for the feast of the nativity of the most Blessed Virgin, dwells upon the immensity of her grace,

in the following manner: "The Virgin Mary was always a great miracle. Was ever any one found or will any one ever be found greater and more illustrious than she? Certainly not among the prophets, nor the apostles, nor the martyrs, nor the patriarchs, nor the thrones, nor the dominations, nor the seraphim, nor the cherubim; in a word, there exists no creature, both among those visible and those invisible, who surpasses her in grandeur and excellence: *Magnum revera miraculum, fratres dilectissimi, fuit semper B. Virgo Maria. Quid namque illa majus, aut illustrius ullo unquam tempore inventum est, seu aliquando inveniri poterit? Hæc sola cœlum ac terram amplitudine superavit, Quidnam illa sanctius? Non prophetæ, non apostoli, non martyres, non patriarchæ, non angeli, non Throni, non Dominationes non Seraphim, non Cherubim, non denique aliud quidpium inter creatas res visibiles aut invisibiles, majus aut excellentius inveniri potest.*

Saint Ephrem is no less explicit in his enunciation of the glories of the Virgin: "Thou art in comparably more elevated in glory, O Virgin, than the entire united celestial hosts; thou art the most sublime miracle of the whole universe; thou art the crown of all the saints, inaccessible, owing to the grandeur of thy splendor: *Nulla comparatione, omnibus superis exercitibus gloriosior, præstantissimum orbis terræ miraculum, omnium sanctorum corona ob fulgorem inaccessa.*

Saint Jerome shows us the Virgin soaring above the entire heavens, the heavenly spirits as well as the saints, by the plenitude of the grace she has received: "Grace is given to others in parts; but with regard

to Mary, the entire plenitude of grace is poured out into her soul: *Cæteris per partes præstatur, Mariæ vero simul se tota infudit gratiæ plenitudo.*

The same doctor calls the Virgin "a garden of delights, in which all kinds of flowers and every perfume of virtue have been collected: *Hortum deliciarum, in quo condita sunt omnia florum genera, et odoramenta virtutum.*"

Saint Peter Damien styles her, "a place of delights, in which God has accumulated all the treasures of grace: *Locum voluptatis, quem Dues omnibus gratiæ divitiis cumulavit.*"

CHAPTER XXX.

CONTEMPLATION.

Of the immensity of the glory enjoyed by the Most Blessed Virgin in Heaven.

Suarez having treated this great question, we cannot do better than reproduce his thoughts.

First of all, says he, it is certain that the Blessed Virgin surpasses, by the perfection of the beatitude she enjoys, all the hierarchical distinctions of angels and men. This is a truth of faith, which the church proclaims in these words: "The most holy mother of God has been exalted above the choirs of angels in the kingdom of heaven: *Exaltata est sancta Dei Genitrix super choros angelorum ad cœlestia regna.*"

The Universal Church has embraced this truth as most certain; which fact causes Saint Anselm to say: "All christendom believes with absolute certainty, that the Virgin was exalted to the highest heavens, and preferred to all the choirs of angels: *Tota christianitas novit quæ illam super omnes cœlos exaltatam, et angelicis choris prælatam, certissime credit.*

Such is also the traditions of all the older fathers, this view being entertained by Saint Chrysostom, Saint John Damascene, Saint Ephrem, Saint Andrew of Crete, and Saint Peter Damien.

The language used by Saint Athanasius concerning the mother of God is no less explicit: "She is truly the queen and the sovereign of all creatures, seated at the right hand of her Son, and reigning over the entire creation: *Vere esse Reginam, et Dominam omnium, a dextris Filii assistentem, et ubique regnantem.*

Saint Bernard thus expresses himself with regard to the elevation of the Virgin in glory: "Inasmuch as she has been elevated in grace, on earth, above all creatures, so also in heaven has she obtained a peculiar glory which belongs to herself alone: *Quantum gratiæ in terris adepta est præ cæteris, tantum obtinuit in cælo gloriæ singularis.*"

Saint John Damascene, in his first discourse on the happy death of the Virgin says: "She surpasses all creatures; she soars above all the works of God; she is elevated to an incomparable height above the heavens. *Omnes res creatas superat, omnibus dominatur operibus, super cœlos cœlorum extollitur incomparabiliter.*"

The reasons why the Virgin is elevated to this incomparable height of glory and happiness are self-evident: Suarez tells us that they are deduced from the grandeur of her dignity, and from the grandeur of her graces and merits.

And in fact, her dignity as mother of God, her grace and her merits exceed, almost infinitely, the dignity, the grace and the merits of all the other inhabitants of heaven: *Et diganitas ejus, et merita et gratia, pene infinite, dignitatem, gratiam ac merita reliquorum beatorum excedunt.* She must therefore be almost infinitely elevated above all the members of the celestial court.

Suarez then explains what are in the Virgin, the character and intensity of intuitive vision: *Quæ et quanta.*

Owing to this incomparable height of glory to which the Blessed Virgin is raised, as well as on account of the incomparable grandeur of her dignity, grace and merits, we may, piously and with probability conclude that the Virgin contemplates in the Word all that God beholds through the science of vision, except what relates in a special manner to Christ and to the interior thoughts of His soul: *Ex his pie et probabiliter colligo videre beatam Virginem in Verbo quidquid Deus videt scientia visionis, iis solum exceptis quæ singulariter ad Christum, et ad interiores animæ ejus cogitationes pertinent.*"

I believe that no one will doubt the existence of an exception of this kind. For, the Blessed Virgin being greatly inferior in dignity and happiness to Christ, it is becoming, that she should remain in ignorance concerning the interior thoughts and sentiments of His soul, unless He should see fit to manifest them to her. But, with the exception of this single reservation, we may believe that the Virgin contemplates, in the Word, all that God beholds through the science of vision.—And this assertion is proved by the opinions of the fathers concerning the excellence of the glory and happiness of the most Blessed Virgin.

Saint Bernard, in his sermon, *Signum magnum*, referring to these words of the Apocalypse, chapter xii: "A woman clothed with the sun: *Et mulier amicta Sole*," and applying them to the Virgin, as Saint Augus-

tine also does (*lib iv, de Symbolo ad Catechumenos, c. i,*) expresses himself as follows: "It is with reason that she is said to be 'clothed with the sun,' she who has penetrated to greater depths, than it is possible for language to utter, into the unfathomable abyss of divine wisdom, so that she has the appearance of being united to that inaccessible light, as much as her condition as a creature allows: *Jure Sole perhibetur amicta, quæ profundissimum divinæ Sapientiæ, ultra quam dici potest, penetravit abyssum, ut quantum creaturæ conditio patitur, luci illi inaccessibili videatur unita.*

This has caused Saint Germain to say, in his discourse on the Assumption: "Thy spirit, O Mary, lives for eternity; thou observest all, thou penetratest all, and thy gaze overshadows all: *Spiritus, O Maria vivit in æternum, omnia observas, omnia intueris, et inspectio tua ad omnes se porrigit.*"

Let not the objection be raised that we are making the Virgin equal to her Son. In the first place, she does not behold all that He beholds, because she does not contemplate His interior thoughts. In the next instance, even did she behold all that He beholds, Christ would, under all contingencies, take precedence over her, inasmuch, as his vision ranges in a light incomparably brighter, and in a clearness incomparably more perfect.

I say, besides, that we are entitled to believe that the Virgin surpasses, in the perfection of beatific vision not only all the heavenly spirits and all men, each one considered individually, but that she also exceeds the

entire perfections of all the angels and of all men taken collectively as one great unit.

Addo probabiliter credi posse superare Virginem in perfectione visionis beatæ non solum singulos sanctos angelos, vel puros homines, sed etiam universas omnium perfectiones in unum collectas.

The reason for this super-exaltation of glory, and for this more than intimate union with the inaccessible light of the Word, is deduced from her dignity of mother of God, from the magnitude of her grace, and from the greatness of her merits. For, as Saint Ildephonsus says, in his second sermon on the Assumption: "Just as what she has accomplished is incomparable, and as what she has received is inestimable, so is the reward of glory, which she has deserved, incomprehensible: *Sicut est incomparabile quod gessit, et inæstimabile quod accepit, ita est incomprehensibile præmium gloriæ quod promeruit.*"

I add, finally, that Saint Bonaventure, in his book, De laudibus Virginis, affirms, agreeably to the opinions of the Fathers, "that the glory of God is more resplendent in the Virgin alone, than in all His other works: *Dei gloriam magis in sola Virgine, quam in cæteris Dei operibus enitere.*" This would not be true, unless the treasures and perfections of all the works of God were united in the Virgin. Whence, the seraphic doctor draws the following conclusion:

"The glorious privilege of the glory of Mary is, that after God, our greatest glory and our greatest joy come from Mary: *Gloriosum gloriæ Mariæ privilegium est,*

quod, post Deum, major nostra gloria et majus nostrum gaudium ex Maria."

From what has been said concerning the immensity of the grace and merits and glory of the most Blessed Virgin, the annexed conclusions may be derived:

Mary, by herself alone, is more deified than the entire heavens.

The communication of divine glory in her, is in relation with her super-eminent dignity, her incomprehensible affinity with the three Persons of the adorable Trinity, her titles of daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, and spouse of the Holy Ghost; and this same communication of divine glory is in relation with the grandeur of her sanctity, her grace, her merits and her love. And as her dignity, her holiness, her grace, her merits and her love exceed almost infinitely, *pene infinite*, according to Suarez, the dignity, sanctity, grace and love of all the blessed spirits; therefore her deification must also exceed, almost infinitely, that of all the inhabitants of the city of heaven. The Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit more intimately united to her soul than to all the other members of the celestial court, taken collectively, flood this privileged soul with the splendors of their divinity, and as there must, somewhere, exist a limit to the interior communication of glory, the three divine Persons, overstepping this limit, wrap the Virgin within the folds of the mantle of their divinity, and surround her with the infinite splendors of Their divinity. Mary appears as though she were at the very centre of the sun of divinity: *Mulier amicta sole.* And these are the infinite rays, whose brightness is

also infinite, which constitute for the mother of God, the queen of heaven, the only mantle of glory worthy of her.

Mary is more resplendent with beauty than the entire heavens.

Beauty in the saints and in the heavenly spirits will be nothing else than the infinite beauty of God Himself, reflected by souls and these pure spirits; the degree of union with God will be the degree of participation with this divine beauty.

But, as Mary is more intimately united with God, than the entire heavens, and as her union exceeds, almost infinitely, that of all the inmates of heaven, the result is, that God will cause His divine beauty to be more resplendent in her alone, than in the entire heavenly court. The mere appearance of the Virgin will ravish us more than all the other inhabitants of heaven taken together.

Mary will be a living mirror, in which the infinite beauty of God, during all eternity, will reflect itself with greater lustre, than in all the saints and blessed spirits who will surround His throne.

The happiness of Mary is greater than that of all others in heaven. Happiness will consist in the communication of God's infinite felicity, which He will impart to the blessed, the share received by each one being proportionate to his merits. But, the merits of the Virgin almost infinitely surpassing the collective merits of the blessed spirits, God will therefore mete out, His infinite felicity to her, in a measure almost infinitely exceeding that employed for the remainder of the heavenly court.

Mary is more agreeable to God than all the others in heaven.

The love which God will entertain for us will be in proportion to our own. And as Mary, alone, loves God more than all the saints and all the blessed spirits united, so will she be more agreeable to God than the entire celestial court.

Mary will love each one of us in particular with a greater love than that of all in heaven.

In her, there will exist a participation with the divine nature, which is charity and love, incomparably greater than in all the saints and blessed spirits united; therefore, in this regard, she will be more loving, and will love us with a love greater than that of the entire heavenly court.

Mary will be more loved by each of us than all the saints and blessed spirits together.

Our love, in heaven, will be measured by sanctity, and the sanctity of Mary almost infinitely exceeds the combined sanctity of all the heavenly inhabitants.

Our love for the blessed will be proportionate to their love for God; we know how Mary's love almost infinitely exceeds that of all the blessed.

Our love will be commensurate with the blessings we will have received; here, too, we know that Mary's intercession, on behalf of our salvation, almost infinitely exceeds that of the saints and angels.

"In Jesus Christ," says Saint Jerome, "there exists plenitude of grace, as in the head, from which it flows, and in Mary, as in the neck, which transmits it to the limbs: *In Christo fuit plenitudo gratiæ sicut in capite*

influente, in Maria sicut in collo transfundente.

Saint Bernardin of Sienna expresses himself as follows: "It is through the Virgin that graces are transmitted from the head, who is Jesus Christ, to His entire mystical body. From the moment that this Virgin conceived in her womb the Word of God, she acquired, so to speak, a certain jurisdiction over all the graces, which were to proceed from the Holy Spirit throughout time, so that no creature ever obtained from God, any grace or any virtue, except through the dispensation of this tender mother. On this account, all gifts, all virtues and all graces are distributed through Mary's hands, to whomsoever she wishes, whenever it is her desire, and in the manner most pleasing to her: *Per Virginem a capite Christi vitalis gratiæ in ejus corpus mysticum transfunduntur. A tempore quo Virgo Mater concepit in utero Verbum Dei, quamdam, ut sic dicam, jurisdictionem obtinuit in omni Spiritus Sancti processione temporali ; ita ut nulla creatura aliquam a Deo obtineat gratiam vel virtutem, nisi secundum ipsius piæ Matris dispensationem. Ideo omnia dona, virtutes et gratiæ, quibus vult, quando vult, et quomodo vult, per ipsius manus dispensantur.*" (1)

Mary gives, presently, and will give, throughout eternity, more glory to God than all the celestial court united.

"God is only honored," says Saint Augustin, "by love: *Non colitur Ille nisi amando.*" Love is not only the most sublime element, but also the life-giving prin-

(1) Serm. LXI. tom. I, et Serm. III, *De glorioso nomine Mariæ*, tom. III.

ciple and the essence of worship. The adorations and the praises of the blessed are pleasing to God and worthy of Him, only because they emanate from hearts fired with love. And as the Virgin, alone, has more love for God than is possessed by all the heavenly hosts, it follows that she returns Him more glory than all the saints and angels together. She adores, she blesses, she glorifies, she exalts her God; but as, in her case, this worship proceeds from a heart richer in love than that possessed by the whole heavenly court, her adorations, her praises, her hymns of thanksgiving ascend as would the fumes of an incense, which is more agreeable to God than that of all the hierarchies of angels and men.

Simultaneously with that of the Virgin, all the hearts of the saints and blessed spirits throb with love for God; but the pulsations of the Virgin's heart, in itself alone conveys to God more love, and therefore more glory than the united pulsations of all the hearts of the saints in heaven. Thus, at each heart-beat, the Virgin honors God more and gives Him more glory than is done by all in paradise. And thus will it be during time everlasting!

Mary's influence with the Almighty surpasses the combined influence of all the celestial spirits.

Influence with God is proportionate to the dignity, the merit, the love of the one who intercedes, therefore, the dignity of Mary, as the mother of God, her merits and her love surpassing almost infinitely the dignity, the merit, and the love of all the saints and angels, is she possessed of greater influence with God, than is

possessed in the heavenly court. For this reason she is rightfully styled: "Omnipotence suppliant: *omnipotentia supplex*," and "the propitiation of the world: *mundi propitiatorium*."

The fathers of the church and the doctors vie with each other in extolling this extraordinary power. "If thou art silent," exclaims Saint Anselm, "no one prays, no one comes to our assistance, but if, on the contrary, thou openest thy lips, all the saints pray with thee. (1) Thou art, after God, my only hope; without thee, I would neither meet with compassion nor clemency, for thou art the mother of virtues." (2)

"God has intended," says Saint Bernard, "that we should receive everything through Mary; the author of grace Himself, as well as all the grace which come to us from Him: *Totum nos habere voluit per Mariam*." (3)

In presence of this exalted glory of the Virgin, what christian would not cry out, with Saint Ildephonsus, in a transport of admiration, of gratitude and of love:

"O thou, our protectress, our lady, our sovereign, the mother of our God, the handmaid of thy divine Son, the mother of the Creator of the world, do thou hearken to our most cherished desire, to our most ardent prayer; do thou obtain for us that we may be filled with the Spirit of Thy Son, our divine Redeemer, in order that we may always feel, think, say and love those things which are worthy of thee. Thou hast

(1) Orat. XLV ad S. Virg. Mariam.

(2) Orat. XLVI ad eamdem.

(3) Serm. in Nativ. B. M. V.

been chosen by God, called by God; thou art near to God, united with Him; thou didst receive the visit of the angel; thou art blessed amongst all women; thou alone didst remain a virgin amongst mothers. A mistress among servants. A queen among thy sisters.—All generations — all the heavenly Powers proclaim thee blessed; and our faith, our soul, our love, our hómages, our praises, will never weary of extolling thy happiness!" (1)

(1) S. Ildefons. ex lib. de Virginit. B. Mariæ.

PART SECOND.

PARTICULARS CONCERNING

THE

LIFE OF BERNADETTE

AND THE

PILGRIMAGE OF LOURDES

SINCE THE APPARITIONS

DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIME.

PART SECOND.

PARTICULARS CONCERNING THE

LIFE OF BERNADETTE

AND THE

PILGRIMAGE OF LOURDES

CHAPTER I.

God's purpose in leaving Bernadette at Lourdes after the Apparitions.

We are now about to enter upon the second period of Bernadette's public life, which extends from the close of the apparitions in 1858 until July, 1866, when she enters the novitiate of the Sisters of Nevers. It is not without deep purpose that God detains Bernadette in her native place during these eight years.

By thus manifesting before the eyes of the clergy and people the weakness of the instrument He has employed, He intends showing that the pilgrimage of Lourdes is His work.

He wishes that Bernadette should confirm the testimony she has given, and complete her mission in presence of the ecclesiastical authority and of the faithful. It will be seen how admirably Bernadette responds to the plan of God.

On the 28th of July, 1858, the bishop of Tarbes had appointed a commission of inquiry.

On the 17th of November following, the commission proceeds to Lourdes and repairs immediately to the Grotto, where they are to meet Bernadette; but in a very short space of time nearly five hundred persons have assembled at the Grotto. We will now quote from the report made by the secretary of the commission:

"After a delay of half an hour, Bernadette appears; the crowd open ranks to allow her to pass. Bernadette presents herself before the commissioners with great modesty, but, at the same time, with remarkable assurance; she is calm and self-possessed in the midst of this numerous gathering, and in presence of respectable ecclesiastics, whom she has never seen, of whose mission, however, she has been informed.

"On being invited by the president of the commission to relate what she had seen and heard at the Grotto, the young girl immediately begins her recital. But, at the very first words she utters, it is evident that, owing to the jostling of the crowd, which is constantly receiving accessions, it will be impossible to preserve the silence necessary in order that every word uttered by the child be heard. The attitude of the spectators was, undoubtedly, most friendly; but all being anxious to hear Bernadette as distinctly as possible, the rush for front places was so great, that it became impossible to maintain order. The commission therefore content themselves with making inquiry, on the ground itself, concerning those details and circum-

stances which might be useful in shedding light upon, and facilitating the comprehension of the facts in the case, and then decide to adjourn, in order to meet again in the sacristy of the church of Lourdes, where Bernadette is to repair in order to relate her narrative." (1)

It is consequently in this sacristy, shadowed by the tabernacle in which Jesus Christ dwells, and not far from the baptismal fount, in whose waters she was regenerated, that Bernadette relates what she has seen and heard at the Grotto of Lourdes.

She not only relates, but also replies to all the questions propounded to her.

In presence of so imposing an assembly, Bernadette has only one thought uppermost in her mind: she is there to give testimony in favor of the most Blessed Virgin.

Simplicity and candor are noticeable in her entire demeanor; she is at her ease; her assurance is modest, and she is immovably calm; her language is the dialect in use in the mountains; she expresses herself easily and simply, but always conformably to the doctrine of the church. When she makes the recital of the apparitions, it becomes manifest to those who listen to her, that she is aided by an invisible power.

In presence of the facts affirmed by the child, with such angelic candor, and at the sight of the wisdom of her replies and of the innocence, shining upon her countenance, the members of the commission cannot refrain from believing in the apparitions of the immac-

(1) Rev. Mr. Fourcade: *The Apparitions at the Grotto of Lourdes*.

ulate Virgin. In their eyes, Bernadette is the chosen one, the confidant of that divine Virgin, and her embassadress to the church.

However, in their judgment, what completes Bernadette's testimony, by stamping it with irresistible power, is the fact, that God marks it with His seal: this seal of God is the occurrence of miracles. From the moment that the fountain of the Grotto gushed up miraculously beneath the young girl's hand, miracles have not ceased, and from year to year, they are to increase in number.

The members of the commission occupy themselves, with indefatigable ardor, in examining these miracles; but not being able to investigate the truth of all, owing to the large number which have been wrought, they select thirty, which are submitted to the most vigorous examination, the result of which is then incorporated in the report which they present to the bishop.

Thus, these men of faith and science become convinced, as well by Bernadette's recital, as by the number and quality of the miracles themselves, that Bernadette has spoken the truth, and that the immaculate Virgin has appeared to her.

All the labors of the commission have been successively submitted to the bishop; he has seen, examined and scrutinized them all. And as the result of such examination, which lasts nearly four consecutive years, he too remains convinced that Bernadette has spoken the truth, and that the immaculate Virgin has appeared to her.

However, before promulgating his doctrinal decision

he causes Bernadette to be brought before him: he wishes to see and hear her once more. Thus, in a last hearing, before the bishop, the members of the commission and other witnesses, she relates the apparitions, with which she has been favored at the Grotto of Lourdes; she answers all the questions put to her by these men, whose authority is so imposing, and she does this to the entire satisfaction of the assembly. Bernadette appears, more than ever, assisted from on high; her assurance is super-human; by the inimitable tone of her voice, the conviction arises that she is relating what she has seen and what she has heard.—When she comes to the recital of the apparition of the 25th of March, and imitates the attitude and gestures of the most Blessed Virgin, at the moment of her saying, "I am the Immaculate Conception," the entire assembly are moved, and tears are seen trickling down the face of the bishop. When the examination was over, he asked, with deep emotion, "Did you remark that child?"

Bernadette had fulfilled her mission as far as it concerned the ecclesiastical authority.

CHAPTER II.

Bernadette's life at Lourdes after the apparitions—Her fidelity in corresponding with the designs of God—Her unalterable patience in suffering—Extraordinary pain she endured on Good Friday—Bernadette, when in a dying condition, instantaneously cured by the Water of the Grotto.

As we have seen, the parents of Bernadette, having recalled her from Bartres, sent her to the school kept by the Sisters of Nevers, in order that she might prepare herself for her first communion. From this moment, Bernadette may be said to have remained, through a special dispensation of providence, under the guardianship and watchful care of these religious ladies, who are in charge of the hospital, and give a christian education to young girls.

Bernadette attends their school for two years. During her stay there, nothing can be more simple than her exterior life; she is not to be distinguished from her companions, whose course of studies she follows exactly, without there being any distinction in her favor.

She meets with difficulty in learning what she is taught; she evinces but little inclination for any branch save that of christian doctrine. God's design is that this soul, the object of His predilections shall soar above everything human, and above whatsoever may

inspire vanity. Such was Bernadette's condition when He made use of her as an instrument; such He wills her to remain until the end of her life.

She excells in the science of the love of God: This science is sufficient unto her. By her companions she is remarked as the humblest one of their number, her endeavor is to pass unnoticed everywhere, and to be the last in everything, In the religious exercises of the school, however, she is remarked, despite herself. Her lively faith, the manner, even, in which she makes the sign of the cross, her recollection, her modesty and her angelic deportment reveal glimpses of what is passing interiorly.

However great the esteem in which Bernadette is held by the religious, they carefully abstain from giving her any outward proof of their sentiments in her regard. She is on the same footing as all their other pupils; and in the early part of her stay with them, they are even more strict than usual, in requiring humility from her.

After having spent two years of her school life under the parental roof, Bernadette is received as a boarder by the religious ladies of the hospital, the administrators of which, are happy at being able to offer her this asylum. In her new position, Bernadette continues to follow the classes, as much as her health, her strength and the visits, she receives from pilgrims, allow. She tries to make herself useful, and to be of assistance in helping the sisters with their labors, which are specially directed toward caring for the poor.

An immense consolation for her is the fact that the superioress and all the religious treat her as though she were a member of the community. She eats at their table, takes her recreations with them, sleeps in their dormitory, assists at their devotional exercises, is present at the prayers and morning meditations in the chapel, at holy mass, at spiritual reading in the evening, and finally, at the prayer which they afterward offer up before the Blessed Sacrament; this is their relaxation for all the labors of the day.

During her stay at Lourdes, Bernadette is frequently troubled with asthma. The attacks are sometimes so violent, that she is obliged to say to the sisters:

"Take me to the window, so that I may breathe." This is not her only suffering, but she endures every anguish with angelic patience; she smiles at everything!

These repeated sufferings, which our Lord sent to Bernadette, were— we cannot repeat it too often—a secret of His wisdom and His love. The lily of virginity never grows better and is never better protected, than when it is surrounded by the thorns of suffering. Therefore it is, that these thorns have been Bernadette's lot from her most tender years; the Divine Master delights in multiplying them, in order that they form a more impregnable rampart around her heart.

Sufferings are treasures of the highest value. Through them, Jesus Christ allows the souls he loves a part in the agonies of His Passion; He leaves upon them the imprint of His cross; and the greatest proof

of His love is to share His cross with them. He accompanies this communication of His cross and sufferings with a rich effusion of His grace and a great increase of divine love. Whence it follows that the more Jesus Christ crucifies a soul He loves, the more He elevates it in sanctity; the more He inflames it with His love, the more He causes it to acquire merits for heaven. The purest souls, those in which virginity has been preserved in full bloom, are selected by Him in preference to all others in order to associate them with His sufferings upon the cross. He goes so far as to imprint upon them His crown of thorns and His five wounds. And as to the martyrs, He imprints on them a striking resemblance to His scourged and bleeding body! These are the highest proofs of His love in this world! And the crowns which are prepared in heaven answer fully the anticipations which such proofs must necessarily awaken!

It pleased the Divine Master, on Good Friday, either in 1862 or 1863, to treat Bernadette as one of those privileged souls upon which He imprints His cross.

He makes her feel some of the sufferings He endured in His Passion. It seemed to Bernadette as though a sword were being thrust through her left shoulder; the pain was so intense that she thought she could not live, and interior martyrdom was depicted upon her countenance. "During that whole day," said to us the sister, who was the infirmarian at Lourdes, "I was trembling lest she should expire in my arms." Her eyes, tenderly riveted upon the cruci-

fix, showed with what love she united herself with the sufferings of her divine Saviour.

This adorable Master did her the favor of thus keeping her upon the cross with Him, until Holy Saturday when this mysterious pain, as it were, ingulfed in the joys of the resurrection.

We have now to relate how the most Blessed Virgin caused her influence in Bernadette's favor to be made manifest by restoring her health instantaneously, at the very moment when she was about to draw her last breath. This fact which has never yet been mentioned by any historian, was communicated to us by the persons who were around Bernadette, and who nursed her assiduously.

Toward the close of April, 1862, the child was on the verge of the tomb. She was suffering from a complication of diseases; attacks of asthma, inflamation of the lungs, and other troubles besides.

Her condition became so grave, that there was a consultation of physicians. Alas! they declare that there is no more hope, that she has only a few hours to live, and that it is necessary to hasten the administration of the last sacraments. One of the physicians, Mr. Balencie, who has a brother, a Jesuit, at present attached to the mission of Madagascar, on returning home that evening, said to his wife: "Tomorrow, Bernadette Soubirous will be no more." Upon this declaration coming from the physicians, the superioress and the sisters of the hospital diligently prepare everything for the last sacraments. They inform Bernadette that the Divine Master is

about to give Himself to her under the form of the viaticum. The child shows her joy rather by signs than by words. The chaplain of the hospital, who was her confessor, during the entire time she spent at Lourdes after the first apparitions, brings her the holy viaticum and gives her extreme unction. This was on the 26th of April, at about six o'clock in the evening. Fortified by the last sacraments of the church, Bernadette's only desire was to obtain the happiness of taking her flight into the arms of her God. Her strength was exhausted; humanly speaking, she must inevitably succumb; she seemed to have merely a breath of life.

The sisters were very sad; they were only awaiting the instant when the heartrending separation would occur. Mother Alexandria Roques, the superioress, leaves her for a moment, in order to pour out, more freely her grief at the feet of the crucifix, and to offer to the divine Saviour the sacrifice of her dear Bernadette. During this time, the infirmarian, yielding to a thought suggested by faith, brings a little glass filled with water from the miraculous fountain, presents it to the agonizing girl and says to her: "Here is some water from the Grotto, try to drink a few drops of it." The child makes an effort, extends her hand, grasps the glass and approaching it to her lips, swallows its entire contents at one draught. The miraculous water has scarcely had time to reach her internal organs which are parched with heat of the fever, before she cries out with a tone of assurance and a smiling countenance: "I am cured!" The news is

immediately conveyed to the superioress, who refuses to believe it; then another sister comes and confirms the glad tidings. Mother Alexandria rises from her kneeling desk, goes back to her whom she had left in a dying condition, and finds her full of life.

The miracle is visible; all hearts are given up to joy. Bernadette arises, and accompanied by the sisters, she goes before the Holy Tabernacle to give thanks to Him whom she has just received under the form of viaticum. She was completely cured.

The next morning, at about seven o'clock, the doctor who believed that he would find Bernadette dead, goes to the hospital; when, behold! the very first person he sees under the portico, is herself!—"Is it really you Bernadette? says he to her, his stupefaction is so great—"Yes sir, I am really Bernadette.—"And how do you happen to be here?"—"The water of the Grotto cured me."—"But where are you going?"—"To mass to thank God."

The most Blessed Virgin, who had just cured Bernadette, by means of the water of the Grotto, was, later and on another occasion, again to make her experience her miraculous power. Two or three times since she has been living at the mother house of the sisters of Nevers, Bernadette, being despaired of by the physicians, has received the last sacraments. And each time, just when she was thought to be on the point of breathing her last, the fortunate favorite of the most Blessed Virgin would say: "The moment is not yet come, give me a little water of our Lady of Lourdes, and I will be cured!" And the immaculate Virgin has

cured her at Nevers as well as at Lourdes.

At the hospital of Lourdes, Bernadette is happy to inhabit the abode of the poor, and live in the society of the sisters of Nevers.

It is hardly necessary to add, that, in turn, the Sisters are delighted at having her in their midst.

All the religious communities in France and innumerable lay persons who are eminent in social rank and piety, envy them this privilege, and they have abundant reason to do so.

The Sisters of Nevers possess Bernadette whilst she is fulfilling her public mission. This occupies a great part of her life, and it is doubtless its most beautiful portion!

Pilgrims consider it a great favor and grace from heaven to see her and to listen to her for a few moments; these religious ladies however live with her during the eight years which follow the apparitions. They are in familiar converse with her who spoke to the most Blessed Virgin; they enjoy her presence, her conversation, at their own pleasure; she is in their midst, during their devotional exercises; they approach the holy table with her. They breathe unceasingly the perfume of innocence which exhales from her person.

If the divine Master rewards for the glass of cold water which is given to the humblest of His creatures, how great must be the graces and spiritual favors with which He recompenses these Sisters for all they do for His dear Bernadette.

The years, which she spends with them, are the most beautiful in their lives, and a foretaste of the happiness of heaven.

CHAPTER III.

Bernadette, the Immaculate Virgin's witness before the public; and the Immaculate Virgin, Bernadette's guardian in the midst of multitudes.

We have seen how Bernadette has fulfilled her mission before the ecclesiastical authorities. We will see in this chapter that she acquitted herself no less admirably before the public.

In the eight years, during which God leaves Bernadette at Lourdes, pilgrims succeed each other in great numbers, and miracles are multiplied. People come to the sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin not only from all the provinces of France, but also from foreign countries, and from the most distant lands. These countless pilgrims are attracted thither by faith. As soon as they enter the Grotto, they are seized with profound emotion—they feel that the place is holy; on bended knees they pray to the immaculate Virgin, they implore her intercession, they supplicate her to present their petitions to her divine Son, in order that this dearly beloved Son may grant them, out of consideration for His mother. After these fervent prayers addressed to the divine Virgin, they approach the fountain which, at a sign emanating from her authority, has miraculously sprung up beneath Bernadette's hand while she was in ecstasy. This is the water which has

worked so many miracles and which will continue to perform others, until the end of time! Following Bernadette's example, they wash their faces in the basin into which it flows, they drink it, and they take some of it home. They cannot tear themselves away from this Grotto, sanctified by the presence and the miracles of the mother of God. Her apparitions to Bernadette are uppermost in their minds. They see the spot where Bernadette, kneeling and transfigured, contemplated her resplendent with beauty, and conversed with her. Being unable to behold the Virgin, in reality and in her glory, they desire, at least, to see the fortunate girl to whom she revealed herself, the angel whom she deputed to the clergy and to the people. Thus Bernadette is constantly receiving the visits of the pilgrims.

Whether beneath her parents' roof, or at the hospital, Bernadette, as her earliest historian tells us, was ever accessible to all. (1)

Every catholic who enjoys the happiness of seeing her, is struck by her candor, by the innocence displayed in her looks and upon her countenance, by her simplicity, her humility, and the plainness of her attire. At the mere sight of her features every one is impressed with the idea that she is the chosen one of God—the confidant and the messenger of the immaculate Virgin.

When, however, her language is listened to, the divine mission with which she has been entrusted becomes still more manifest. With regard to every thing concerning the fact of the apparitions, Bernadette

(1) Rev. Mr. Fourcade: *The Apparitions at the Grotto of Lourdes.*

speaks with super-human wisdom. She possesses the lucidity of an angel. She is visibly supported by assistance from above. At her conversations, and at the sound of her voice, souls participate in that something which was realized by the bishop of Tarbes, the Right Reverend Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, on the occasion of Bernadette's last examination, when she spoke in his presence. The holy bishop was so deeply moved, that copious tears coursed along his cheeks, as we have already mentioned.

The pilgrims, after having seen and heard Bernadette, return to their homes with hearts overflowing with joy. Nothing has occurred to mar the happiness of their pilgrimage! They can truly say: "We have seen a creature in whom there is nothing human, but in whom, on the contrary, every thing is celestial and angelical!"

All the good that the sight of Bernadette, that her words and her recitals have done to the countless catholics to whom it has been given to see and hear her, is God's secret: it will be revealed hereafter to our great admiration.

Bernadette is the immaculate Virgin's invincible witness. Men from every land, from every rank of society, of all conditions and professions, bishops, theologians, magistrates, scientists, soldiers and writers, have seen and interrogated her. Although utterly ignorant concerning every other subject, Bernadette expresses herself with regard to the Virgin and her apparitions, with a clearness, a precision and a facility altogether amazing. She retains the tranquillity and composure

characteristic of one who is sure of herself. Difficult, nay captious questions are put to her. Her answers are always prompt, decisive and peremptory.

One day, Bernadette relating her visions to a magistrate, told him that the Virgin made use of the local dialect of the Pyrenees. The magistrate immediately interrupted her, saying, not from any lack of faith, but in order to hear what she would reply:

"You are not telling the truth, my child! God and the Blessed Virgin do not understand your dialect, and they know nothing of such a miserable jargon."

"If they are ignorant, sir, how is it that we can speak it ourselves! And if they do not understand it, how is it that we do?"

The same magistrate asking her if the personage who appeared to her resembled any of the ladies who had accompanied him, and who belonged to the highest circles of society in Pau, Bernadette looked at them for a moment, and deeming that it would be an insult to the most holy mother of God to compare her with mortal women, shook her head, and answered contemptuously: "Oh! that is quite a different matter!"

Bernadette is the invincible witness of the immaculate Virgin, by the humility which is constantly noticeable in her. She saw herself environed by the respect of the multitudes; she received marks of esteem and veneration from the great. Never was she surprised in an exhibition or indication of human vanity. Bernadette has always given proof of being humility itself. How many facts might be cited in support of this assertion! Here is an instance, in which Bernadette's

humility was put to a delicate test. The circumstance is related by Rev. Mr. Fourcade, who, as has been observed before was her first historian.

"The Right Reverend De Garsignies, Bishop of Soissons, having come to Lourdes, wished to see Bernadette. He was so greatly touched by her recital, and so convinced of her truthfulness, that he begged her to accept and keep, as a memento, his silver mounted chaplet; and in order that she might make less difficulty in taking it, he added that this chaplet had been blessed by the Sovereign Pontiff. The young girl, as though she had made a vow not to accept anything, refused in the most formal manner this enticing gift, excusing herself, however with thanks so respectfully expressed, that the prelate understood that it was he, who must yield."

She replied to a lady, who, for a similar reason, made her a similar offer: "Keep your chaplet, madam; mine is more becoming to my poverty."

This very great humility has constantly been allied in Bernadette to the most absolute disinterestedness. Here let us again listen to her original historian, Rev. Mr. Fourcade: "She belongs to a poor family. She has excited the liveliest interest in all those who have seen her; many a time persons of high rank, rich and pious ladies have been moved to tears by her; silver, gold, jewels, and valuable articles have often been offered to her; she has constantly and tenaciously refused every thing. A very wealthy pious lady having heard of her delicacy, and not venturing to offer her anything, openly slipped two gold pieces into the

pocket of her dress, which she thus hoped to make her adroitly accept. Bernadette discovered the stratagem, blushed perceptibly, withdrew the coins from her pocket with an energy which was not devoid of nobility, and compelled the generous lady to take them back at once. How many persons proposed to her to exchange her poor wearing apparel for more suitable clothing; she never would consent to make the slightest change in the simplicity and coarseness of her attire."

Such is Bernadette! What fills the measure of our admiration, is the fact that her parents, notwithstanding their great poverty, shared, as long as they lived, the heroic disinterestedness of their daughter. This firmness in refusing everything partakes of the wonderful, and is one of the most beautiful facts which has happened in this century!

Finally, by the holiness of her life, Bernadette has confirmed the truth of her mission. From the age of fourteen to twenty-two, God so willing it, she was unceasingly exposed to the gaze of the public and in constant relations with persons of every condition in life. Still, during all this time, she exemplified by her actions and her language, the truth of the verdict rendered by the multitudes on the occasion of the apparitions:

"There is the saint!" The serenity resplendent upon her brow, and the peace of soul reflected upon her countenance have always been noticed; candor and innocence beamed in her eyes and were exhaled from her entire person. People were compelled to recog-

nize in her the angelic child, to whom the immaculate Virgin had condescended to appear so many times; upon whom she had smiled and rested her gaze with maternal love; for Bernadette's countenance, bore, as it were, the reflection of these holy apparitions. It was imposible to look upon her without being filled with profound respect; for it was felt, that the chosen one of God and of the immaculate Virgin was there present. A hidden grandeur was discoverable in her, which is superior to all human grandeur, the majesty of innocence.

These were the feelings excited in the breasts of thousands upon thousands of pilgrims from every land, and of men filling every station in life. They have seen all this with their own eyes, theyhave borne witness to its truth; they have deemed it one of the greatest blessings of their lives, and have considered it a favor whose memory shall be indelible. During these eight years of her stay at Lourdes, the greater part of her time, as it has been stated, was taken up in bearing witness to the immaculate Virgin. And still, notwithstanding so many interviews, notwithstanding the multitudes which have surrounded her, Bernadette remains always the same, exhaling always the same perfume of innocence and humility! Of all the miracles wrought by the immaculate Virgin, this is, in our judgment, the most beautiful and the most prodigious!

Such is also the opinion of the historian of our Lady of Lourdes, which he expresses in the following remarkable terms:

"The mother of God," says Mr. Henry Laserre,

"whilst visiting Bernadette, whilst assigning to her the part of witness of heavenly things, whilst making of her the centre of an immense concourse of people, and, as it were, an object of pilgrimage, had protected her simplicity and candor by a miracle greater than all others, and had made her the extraordinary gift, the divine gift of remaining a child."

This miracle supposes that the most Blessed Virgin's gaze constantly rested upon Bernadette, whom it sheltered with its mantle of protection, so that nothing tarnished the purity and candor of her soul.

This miracle too finds its explanation in the mysterious retreat, in which the most Blessed Virgin was pleased to confine Bernadette's soul. By this retreat, we mean the three secrets which she confided to her. They constitute for Bernadette an intrenched fortress, which she never leaves, and within whose walls she is beyond the reach of human beings. These three secrets as we have already said are her light, her consolation, and her strength. In this inner citadel, Bernadette is alone with the queen of heaven. No member of the church militant will ever enter there. No one will have access to this interior kingdom, which the mother of God has reserved for herself, and which she alone wishes to govern until the end shall have come. It would seem as if human beings were unable to endure such a revelation in this land of exile; at all events, they may judge from this fact, to how great a degree the queen of heaven has honored Bernadette, and how much they ought likewise to honor her themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

January 18th, 1862. Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of Tarbes.

For four years, miracles had unceasingly proved the truth of the apparitions.

Still, however convincing such proof might be, the judgment of the church was none the less necessary in this matter.

The church alone has the right of taking cognizance of cases of this nature. The bishop is, so to speak, the judge of the lower court; it is incumbent upon him to render judgment. The longer the time employed by the bishop of Tarbes in the examination, the greater the weight that would attach to his judgment. And we have seen that it was impossible to push farther the investigation for truth. The judgment rendered by him was therefore an expression of the highest authoritative value for catholics. Henceforth, they possessed every guarantee; the pilgrimage of our Lady of Lourdes was approved by the church.

Here is the text of the bishop's memorable pastoral letter.

Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of Tarbes rendering judgment concerning the Apparitions which have occurred at the Grotto of Lourdes.

"Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, by the mercy of God and the favor of the holy apostolic See, Bishop of Tarbes, assistant at the Pontifical Throne, etc.

"To the clergy and faithful of our diocese, greeting and benediction in our Lord Jesus Christ.

"At every period of humanity, well beloved co-laborers and very dear brethren, marvelous communications have been established between heaven and earth. At the origin of the world, the Lord appeared to our first parents, to reproach them with their crime of disobedience. In the following ages we find Him in converse with the patriarchs and the prophets; and the Old Testament is frequently the history of the heavenly apparitions with which the children of Israel were favored.

"These divine favors were not to cease with the Mosaic law; on the contrary, they were to be, under the law of grace, both more numerous and more striking.

"In the very infancy of the church, in those times of bloody persecutions, christians received visits from Jesus Christ or from the angels, who came, either to reveal to them the secrets of the future, or to deliver them from their fetters, or to give them strength during combat. Thus it was according to the thought of a judicious writer, that God encouraged these illustrious confessors of the faith, at moments, when the pow-

erful ones of the earth united all their efforts to stamp out, whilst still in its bud, the doctrine which was to save the world.

"These supernatural manifestations did not exclusively fall to the lot of the first centuries of christianity. History attests that they have been perpetuated from age to age, for the glory of religion and the edification of the faithful.

"Amidst heavenly apparitions, those of the most Blessed Virgin, widely attract public attention, and they have been an abundant source of blessings for the world.

"In traversing the catholic universe the traveler meets from distance to distance, with temples consecrated to the mother of God; and many of these monuments owe their origin to the apparition of the queen of heaven. We already possess one of these blessed sanctuaries, founded four centuries since, in consequence of a revelation made to a young shepherdess, and where thousands of pilgrims repair yearly, prostrating themselves before the throne of the glorious Virgin Mary, and imploring her mercies. (1)

"Let us give thanks to the Almighty! In the infinite treasury of His goodness, He reserves a new favor for us. He wishes that, in the diocese of Tarbes a new sanctuary shall be erected to the glory of Mary. And what is the instrument which He is to employ in order to communicate to us His merciful designs? Once again, *that which is most feeble in the world;* a child fourteen years of age, Bernadette Soubirous, born at Lourdes, of a poor family."

(1) Our Lady of Garaison.

Then follows a summary account of the apparitions of the most Blessed Virgin to Bernadette.

Bishop Laurence continues:

"Such is, in substance, the recital we have gleaned from Bernadette's lips, in presence of the commission, who were assembled to hear her a second time.

"According to her account then, this young girl has seen and heard a being calling herself the Immaculate Conception, who, although in human shape, was neither seen nor heard by any of the numerous persons present on the occasion. She must therefore be a supernatural being. What opinion is to be held concerning this event?

"You are not ignorant of the fact, dearly beloved brethren, that the church proceeds with wise slowness in appreciating supernatural facts: she requires positive proofs, before admitting them and proclaiming them to be divine. Since his original downfall, man, in this matter especially, is subject to many errors. If he be not led astray by his reason, which has become so feeble, he may be a victim to the wiles of the devil. Who does not know that, at times, 'Satan himself, transformeth himself into an angel of light,' (1) in order that we may be more easily ensnared?

"Thus, the dearly beloved disciple tells us: 'believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God.' (2)

"Dearly beloved brethren, we have made this trial. The event, of which we are speaking to you, has been

(1) II Cor., cap. xi. v. 14.

(2) Ep. Joan, cap. IV, v. 1.

for four years, the object of our solicitude; we have followed it throughout its various phases; we have sought inspiration from members of the commission, composed of pious, learned and experienced priests, who have interrogated the child, studied the facts, examined and weighed every circumstance connected with the subject. We have also invoked the authority of science, and we remain convinced that the apparition was supernatural and divine, and that, consequently, what Bernadette saw, was the most Blessed Virgin. Our conviction has been established by Bernadette's testimony, and more especially by the facts which have occurred, and which can only be explained through divine intervention.

"The young girl's testimony offers all the guarantees we may desire. And, in the first place, her sincerity cannot be doubted. Who does not admire, on approaching her, the simplicity, candor and modesty of this child? Whilst every one dwells upon the wonders which have been revealed to her, she, alone is silent—she speaks only when she is questioned; then she relates every thing without affectation, and with touching ingenuousness; and to the many questions put to her, she unhesitatingly returns clear, precise, and appropriate replies, bearing the stamp of deep conviction. She has been submitted to severe trials, but threats never caused her to waver; she always proved herself nobly disinterested in presence of the most generous offers. Never contradicting herself, she constantly, in the various interrogatories she was made to undergo, maintained what she had said previously, neither

adding nor withdrawing any thing from the testimony she had already given. Bernadette's sincerity is therefore incontestable. Let us add that it is not contested. Her contradictors, themselves, when she met with any, have rendered her this homage.

"But, if Bernadette did not intend to deceive, has she not deceived herself? May she not have thought she saw and heard that which she affirms to have occurred? Was she not the victim of a hallucination? Are there any facts to justify us in entertaining such doubts? The wisdom of her replies reveals the existence, in this child, of a straightforward mind, a calm imagination, and good sense above her years. In her, religious feeling never manifested itself with any appearance of enthusiasm; neither intellectual disorders, nor perversions of the senses, nor singularity of character, nor morbid affection, was ever remarked in her, which might have disposed her towards imaginary creations. She has seen, not once only, but eighteen times; at first, she saw suddenly, at a moment when there was nothing to prepare her for the event which took place, and during that fortnight, when she expected to see every day, she was disappointed on two occasions, although the surroundings were the same, and the circumstances unchanged. And besides, what took place during the apparitions? Bernadette was subjected to a transformation; her countenance was animated by a new expression; her gaze became fired; she saw things which she had never seen before; she heard a language which she had never previously heard, and whose meaning she did not always comprehend, but which she

never failed to remember. These circumstances, taken together, do not permit belief in a hallucination: the young girl has therefore really seen and heard a being calling herself the Immaculate Conception; and this phenomenon, not being susceptible of a natural explanation, we are justified in believing that the apparition is supernatural.

Bernadette's testimony, already important in itself, derives additional value, we will even say, is completed by the wonderful facts which have taken place since the occurrence of the event first related. If the tree is to be judged by its fruits, we may say, that the apparition related by the young girl is supernatural and divine, because it has produced supernatural and divine effects. What has happened, dearly beloved brethren? The apparition was hardly known, before the report concerning it spread with the rapidity of lightning; it was understood that Bernadette was to repair to the Grotto for fifteen days; when behold, the whole surrounding country is set in motion; streams of people are borne on towards the spot where the apparition takes place; the solemn hour is looked for with religious impatience; and whilst the young girl, ravished, unconscious of self, is absorbed by the object she contemplates, and the witnesses of this prodigy, moved and affected, commingle in admiration and prayer.

"The apparitions have ceased, but the concourse continues; pilgrims coming from remote and neighboring lands, hasten to the Grotto; persons of every age, rank and condition are there to be seen crowded

together. What is the motive which animates these numerous visitors? Ah! they come to the Grotto, to pray and to ask the immaculate Mary for favors. They prove by their devout attitude, that they feel a divine afflatus, as it were, vivifying this rock which has become celebrated for ever more. Souls, which were already christian, have become strengthened in virtue; men, chilled by indifference have been brought back to the practice of religion; obstinate sinners have been reconciled with God, after Our Lady of Lourdes had been invoked in their behalf. Such marvels of grace, whose characteristic features are universality and duration can only have God for their author. Do they not therefore confirm the truth of the apparition?

"If, from the effects produced for the good of souls, we pass to those which concern the health of the body, how many new prodigies have we to relate?"

Here, details are given concerning the gushing up of the fountain, where Bernadette drank and washed herself in presence of the assembled multitudes.

"Sick people," continues the bishop, "tried the water of the Grotto, and their hopes were not vain; several whose infirmities had resisted the most energetic treatment, suddenly recovered their health. These extraordinary cures created a profound sensation; rumors concerning them were soon spread far and wide.

"The sick of all countries asked for the Massabielle water, when they could not be conveyed to the Grotto. How many invalids have been cured? How many families consoled?.....If we desired to call for their

testimony, innumerable voices would be raised to proclaim with grateful accents, the sovereign efficacy of the water of the Grotto. We cannot enumerate here all the favors which have been obtained; but what we must say, is that the water of Massabielle has cured sick persons whose lives where despaired of, and who were declared incurable. These cures were performed through the use of a water bereft of any natural curative properties, the authority of this statement being the report of skillful chemists who analyzed it with the utmost care.

"These cures were performed, some instantaneously, others after having repeated the use of this water two or three times, either as a drink or as an external application. Besides, these cures are permanent. What is the power which produced them? Is it the power of the organism? Science consulted in this regard, has returned a negative reply. These cures are therefore the work of God. As they are related to the apparition, which is their starting point, and which inspired the sick with confidence, there is certainly a close connection between the cures and the apparition; the apparition is divine, since the cures are stamped with the divine seal. But that which proceeds from God is truth! Therefore, the apparition calling herself the Immaculate Conception, that lady whom Bernadette both saw and heard, is the most holy Virgin! Let us then exclaim, the finger of God is here! *Digitus Dei est hic.*

"How is it possible, dearly beloved brethren, not to admire the plan of Divine Providence? At the close

of the year 1854, the immortal Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The Pontiff's language was borne on the wings of the echoes to the very extremities of the earth; hearts bounded with joy and Mary's glorious privilege was everywhere celebrated by festivals, the recollections of which will remain for ever engraven in our memories. And behold, about three years afterward, the Blessed Virgin appearing to a child told her: *I am the Immaculate Conception . . . . . I wish that a chapel be erected here in my honor.*

"Does she not appear to desire that a monument should consecrate the infallible oracle of the successor of Saint Peter.

"And where does she wish this monument to be erected?

"At the foot of our Pyrenees, in a country where congregate the numerous strangers, who from all parts of the world come to our thermal springs in quest of health. Would it not seem, as though she invited the faithful of all nations to come and do her honor in the new temple, which will be built for her?

"Inhabitants of the city of Lourdes, rejoice! the august Mary condescends to favor you with her merciful gaze. She wishes that, alongside of your city, a sanctuary should be erected to herself, whence she will distribute her blessings. Thank her for this proof of love which she gives you; and since she lavishes her maternal tenderness upon you, show that you are her devoted children, by imitating her virtues, and by your firm attachment to religion.

"We are happy, however, in recognizing that the apparition has already borne, in your midst, abundant fruits of salvation. Having been ocular witnesses of the events at the Grotto, and of their marvelous results, your confidence has been great, as your conviction was strong. We have admired your prudence, your docility, in following the advice we gave you to submit to the civil authority, when, for some weeks, you were compelled to interrupt your visits to the Grotto and to repress, within your hearts, the sentiments with which you had been inspired by the spectacle which burst upon your gaze, so vividly, during the fortnight of the apparitions.

"And all of you, our dearly beloved children of the diocese, allow your hearts to dilate with hope; a new era of graces is at hand for you: you are called to reap your share of the blessings which are promised to us. In your supplications and canticles, you will hereafter mingle the name of Our Lady of Lourdes, with the blessed names of Our Lady of Garaison, of Poeylaün, of Héas, and of Piétat.

"From these sacred sanctuaries, the immaculate Virgin will watch and shield you with her tutelary protection. Yes, venerable and dearly beloved brethren, if, with confident hearts, we keep our gaze riveted upon this Star of the Sea, we will weather, without fear of ship-wreck, the storms of life, and we will reach in safety the haven of eternal happiness.

"FOR THESE REASONS,

"After having taken counsel with our venerable brethren, the dignitaries, canons and chapter of our cathedral church;

"HAVING INVOKED THE HOLY NAME OF GOD,

"Following the rules wisely laid down by Benedict XIV, in his work on the beatification and canonization of the saints, for the distinguishing real from false apparitions; (1)

"Having in view the favorable report presented to us by the commission charged with the duty of gathering information concerning the apparition at the Grotto of Lourdes, and the facts relating thereto;

"Having in view the written testimony of the doctors of medicine, whom we have consulted in regard to numerous cures obtained in consequence of the use of the water of the Grotto;

"Considering, in the first place, that the fact of the apparition, whether examined with reference to the young girl who related it, or especially as regards the extraordinary effects which it has produced, can only be explained through the instrumentality of a supernatural cause;

"Considering, in the second place, that this cause can only be divine, since the effects produced being, in some instances, visible signs of grace, such as the conversion of sinners, and in others, derogations to the

(1) Book III, ch. LI,

laws of nature, such as miraculous cures, can be attributed to none other than the author of grace and the Ruler of nature;

"Considering, finally, that our conviction is strengthened by the immense and spontaneous concourse of the faithful to the Grotto, which has been incessant, since the first apparitions, the object being either to ask for favors, or to return thanks for those already received;

"In order to respond to the legitimate impatience of our venerable chapter, our clergy and the laity of our diocese, and of so many pious souls, who, for a long time, have been urging the ecclesiastical authority to render a decision, which motives of prudence have induced us to delay;

"Wishing, also, to satisfy the prayers of several of our colleagues in the episcopacy, and of a great number of distinguished persons, strangers to our diocese;

"After having invoked the lights of the Holy Ghost, and the assistance of the most Blessed Virgin,

"WE HAVE DECLARED AND WE DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

"Article 1. We believe that the IMMACULATE MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, did really appear to Bernadette Soubirous, on the 11th of February, 1858, and on the days following, to the number of eighteen times, in the Grotto of Massabielle, near the city of Lourdes; that this apparition offers all the characteristics of truth, and that the faithful have good grounds for believing it to be certain.

"We humbly submit our opinion to the decision of

the sovereign Pontiff, who is charged with governing the universal church.

"Article 2. We authorize in our diocese the devotion to Our Lady of the Grotto of Lourdes; but we prohibit the publication of any particular form of prayers, of canticles or any book of devotion relating to this event, without our written approbation.

"Article 3. In order to conform ourselves with the will of the Blessed Virgin, several times expressed, on the occasion of the apparition, we propose to build a sanctuary upon the site where the miraculous Grotto is located, and which has become the property of the bishop of Tarbes.

"This building, owing to the abrupt and difficult character of the place, will require long continued labor and, relatively speaking, a large amount of funds. On this account, we need, for the realization of our pious project, the assistance of the priests and faithful of our diocese, of the priests and faithful in France and in foreign countries. We appeal to their generous hearts, and especially to all pious persons, in every land, who are attached to the devotion of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

"Article 4. We address ourselves confidently to the establishments of either sex, consecrated to the education of youth, to the congregations of children of Mary, to the confraternities of the Blessed Virgin, and to the various pious associations whether of our diocese, or of the whole of France. . . . .

"This, our Pastoral Letter, will be read and published in all churches, chapels and oratories of semi-

naries, colleges and hospitals of our diocese, on the Sunday following its reception.

"Given at Tarbes, in our episcopal palace, under our signature, our seal, and the counter-signature of our secretary, on the 18th of January, 1862, feast of Saint Peter's Chair at Rome.

"† BERTRAND-S^{RE}, Bishop of Tarbes.

"*By order:*

"Fourcade, *Canon, Secretary.*"

CHAPTER V.

January, 1862.—Effects produced by the Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of Tarbes.—Ardor displayed by catholics in cantributing their offerings towards the erection of the Sanctuary of the Grotto.—Courage of the holy Bishop in the midst of the difficulties besetting so great an enterprise.—Plan adopted, and beginning of the works in October, 1862.—Bernadette and the Sculptor who is to model the statue of the Immaculate Virgin.

The Pastoral Letter of the Bishop of Tarbes produced a wonderful sensation. It was welcomed with transports of enthusiasm; the joy which found vent was only greater for having been so long pent up. The effect produced by these words of the holy bishop can never be described:

"We believe that the immaculate Mary, mother of God, did really appear to Bernadette Soubirous, on the 11th of February, 1858, and on the days following, to the number of eighteen times; that this apparition offers all the characteristics of truth, and that the faithful have good grounds for believing it to be certain.

"In order to conform ourselves with the will of the Blessed Virgin, several times expressed, on the occasion of the apparition, we propose to build a sanctuary upon the spot occupied by the Grotto."

At this language of a doctrinal decision, at this announcement of the erection of a sanctuary, the faith of catholics, which was kept within bounds for four years, exploded, as it were, and the hearts of all beat at the thought that, at last, the sanctuary, so many times asked for through Bernadette by the immaculate Virgin, is to be reared over the miraculous Grotto.

For the construction of the sacred edifice, the bishop had just made an appeal not only to the catholics of his diocese and of France, but also to those of the entire world. The appeal is favorably received; all hearts were ready, the catholics of the universe deem themselves fortunate in being able to contribute, by means of their gifts, towards the erection of the sanctuary. A generous rivalry prevails. The rich offer their tribute, but the working classes and the poor contribute their donations also, and with incomparable enthusiasm. How many silver pieces, and how many coppers were thrown into the Grotto? How many widows' mites are part of the foundations of the edifice, attracting the gaze of Jesus Christ and of His divine mother?

Inspired by the same faith and by the same cause, all show the same magnanimity—those who offer their gifts for the sanctuary and those who are about to build it. The holy bishop of Tarbes however rises pre-eminent, by the sublimity of his faith and the masculine energy of his character. Although seventy-two years of age, this magnanimous old man leads the enterprise with assurance. He knows by experience that nothing which is done for the Blessed Virgin is onerous or

fatiguing; but that, on the contrary, such labor affords an occasion for the soul to acquire new vigor and life. In his diocese, he has already restored to the Virgin four sanctuaries which the revolution had destroyed. Our Lady of Garaison, Our Lady of Piétat, Our Lady of Poeylaün, Our Lady of Héas, through the instrumentality of his faithful hands, had been replaced upon their altars. The immaculate Virgin now asks him to build her a still more illustrious sanctuary, open to all the nations of the earth and to all future ages.—The bishop will crown his episcopate by this great work. Terrible difficulties have to be overcome in order even to raise the sacred edifice above ground; his courage and his serenity shrink from no obstacles. The most Blessed Virgin desires a sanctuary—he will build one which shall be worthy of her.

But shall the sanctuary enclose the miraculous Grotto within its limits? Or, shall it be erected above the Grotto, leaving it uncovered, serving thus as a crown overhanging this holy spot?

This last idea is preferred. The architect, who was fully competent for the mission he had undertaken, presents, after careful study, the plan of a gothic edifice of magnificent proportions; a crypt is to be constructed over the Grotto, and this crypt will be surmounted by an imposing basilica crowned by a spire, the cross of which will be raised one hundred metres above the Gave. (1) Bishop Laurence, who desired that the monument should be worthy, by its grandeur, of the immaculate Virgin, approves this plan, and

(1) The metre is equivalent to $39\frac{37}{1000}$ inches, English measure.

orders that the undertaking be inaugurated. The work was already in progress by the middle of October 1862. With what indefatigable solicitude did the holy bishop superintend its prosecution!

The project, however, not only contemplated the erection of a sanctuary, and the transformation of the adjoining wild scenery and rugged mountains, but it also designed reproducing in the Grotto, and presenting to the gaze of the pilgrim the immaculate Virgin, who had, so many times, appeared to Bernadette.

This portion of the work was of necessity reserved for Bernadette, and for an artist who possessed the ability to act as her interpreter. The one chosen by Providence for this representation, is Mr. Fabisch, the artist at Lyons. He trembles, notwithstanding his talent, for he must meet the expectations of the public. Let him be re-assured however, because Bernadette's mission is to inspire him.

He comes to Lourdes, and hastens to have an interview with her. At her sight he can not, at first, divest himself of fear; but as soon as she has spoken to him of the white dress and the flowing veil worn by the spotless Virgin, he conceives an ideal. He questions Bernadette in relation to the attitude and the gesture of the Virgin when she said to her: "I am the Immaculate Conception." In reply, Bernadette makes that heavenly gesture, which has so often produced astonishment and caused so many tears to be shed.

"This was for me a revelation," wrote Mr. Fabisch, "my statue was planned. No, never, while I live, will I forget that ravishing expression. I have indeed seen,

in Italy and elsewhere, the master-pieces of the great masters, of those who have excelled in depicting the transports of divine love and of ecstasy, of Fra Angelico, of Pérugino, of Raphael, of Van Dyck, and others. In none have I found such suavity and rapture. And each time, that I either asked Bernadette myself, or caused her to be asked by others, to assume this attitude, her face was always transfigured by that very same expression."

It is related that, at this time, Mr. Fabisch expressed himself, one day, in the following terms: "The details given by Bernadette are suggestive of an ideal so pure and so elevated, that they suffice to prove that she has seen some heavenly beauty." (1)

The sculptor submits the results of his labors to Bernadette, altering them in accordance with her critical remarks, and continuing to do so until she is satisfied.

He then takes his leave, and selects a block of the finest white Carrara marble, from which the soul of this christian artist will bring to light the beautiful Virgin of Lourdes.

Mr. Fabisch has interpreted and expressed as much as lies in the power of a great artist, the revelations made to him by Bernadette. But it was not in his power, as we have already said, to exceed the limits set by a human ideal.

Bernadette, on seeing the statue will exclaim: "It is beautiful, but it is not she! There is all the difference that exists between heaven and earth."

This difference had to exist necessarily. The beauty

(1) Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes.

and the splendor of the Virgin were supernatural; it was therefore not in the artist's power to reproduce that which is above nature.

Let Bernadette and the artist therefore both be comforted! They have fulfilled their mission. Thanks to the work of the one, and the revelations of the other, the entire catholic world is, to-day, witness of the scenes of the Grotto of Lourdes. The Virgin, placed in the hollow of the rock, is present to its gaze. Christian art has reproduced her, and has already multiplied, in infinite numbers, images and statues of the immaculate Virgin. And as the devotion of the various peoples of the earth will constantly continue to increase, so will christian art go on multiplying her statues and images; they will be seen in every country of the world; catholics will be happy to possess them, and this feeling will obtain until the end of time. How many consoled souls! How many souls smitten with the fire of apostolic zeal! How many souls converted! How many souls snatched from infidelity and won over to Jesus Christ.

Such is the future, partly her own work, which is given to Bernadette to contemplate!

CHAPTER VI.

April 4th, 1864.—The Bishop of Tarbes takes possession of the Grotto, and blesses the statue of the most Holy Virgin.—Four hundred priests and from fifty to sixty thousand catholics present at the ceremony.

In order that the pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes be canonically established, a great act had still to be accomplished: it was necessary that the bishop, in the name of the church, should take solemn possession of the miraculous Grotto, and that he should bless the statue of the most Blessed Virgin, which was to be venerated at that spot. The date of this ceremony was fixed for the 4th of April, in the year 1864.

Here is a touching portrayal of this event.

On that day, Lourdes is the "rendez-vous" of immense multitudes, where the inhabitants of the Pyrenees meet those of the surrounding countries. The whole of France is represented there by deputies from its various provinces. These catholics, come together from so many different localities, have assembled in order to witness the triumph of the most Blessed Virgin and to be blessed by her. They number between fifty and sixty thousand.

All the houses of the city are decorated with flags. Lourdes which, on this day, is to receive the glorious title of City of the Immaculate Virgin, has displayed

all its ornaments and treasures in order to celebrate her triumph.

Mary, who is the queen of heaven, at the same time that she is the sovereign of the world, *Reigna cœli*, *Domina mundi*, wishes that nature should contribute a share towards this day's festival. The sky is cloudless, the winds are chained down; alone, the gentle spring zephyrs embalm the air. A brilliant sun sheds its rays upon this scene, embellished by the combined action of heaven and earth.

Upon the signal being given by the bells, the procession, starting from the church in the city, sets out towards the Grotto. It is the most beautiful display the Pyrenees have ever witnessed. The air is filled with floating banners, which serve to indicate the divisions; all ages are represented; little children dressed as angels, young girls in white, young men in holiday attire, fathers and mothers of families, the aged; all classes of society, the civil authorities, the military, the religious of different orders, and congregations, four hundred priests robed in the most beautiful ornaments of the sanctuary, the entire chapter of the cathedral with its insignia of office, all the ecclesiastical dignitaries, and finally, the bishop of Tarbes in pontifical robes, wearing the mitre and bearing the crozier.

During this triumphal march, canticles burst forth, and musical instruments are heard in sonorous harmony. The procession however, although its double columns seem endless, only represents a portion of the pilgrims. The immense multitudes, who have been

unable to enter its ranks, are encamped, in regular order, along the banks of the Gave. They are spread out upon the hills of the right bank, which rise up and form an imposing amphitheatre opposite the Massabille rocks.

At last, the bishop crosses the threshold of the Grotto. At this moment a thrill of joy seized the entire assembly, the multitudes fall upon their knees and with clasped hands, they unite themselves with the bishop, in the great act he is about to accomplish.

When the Pontiff has concluded the prayers and the ceremonies, by which he has blessed and consecrated the statue of the immaculate Virgin, which occupies the identical niche, in which she appeared to Bernadette, upon so many occasions; when in the name of God and of his church, he has thus taken possession of this sanctuary of the most Blessed Virgin, whose portals he has opened to all the nations of the earth, until the end of time; when after having accomplished this solemn action, he intones the hymn of triumph announcing that the pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes is canonically established; then all this assembly realizes that some supernatural and heavenly influence is at work, elevating and transporting them. It is the queen of heaven who is blessing them and making them participate in her triumph.

For the bishop, this was one of the happiest days of his life. His gaze, in which all the past, ever since the first apparition to Bernadette was mirrored, penetrated the veil of futurity, perceiving those processions

of pilgrims, which from century to century, were to come, and prostrate themselves before the immaculate Virgin, and this sight inundates his soul, as it were, with continual floods of joy, which could only be exceeded by the happiness of heaven. This scene was to be before his eyes, at every moment of his life, but above all, as we have seen previously, it was to illumine his last moments at Rome.

The memories of this day were also to be indelible for all these catholic people. Pilgrims of every age, of every rank in society, heads of families, mothers holding tender infants in their arms, children, virgins, and youths, the aged, all returned with jubilant souls, bringing back with them not the bishop's blessing only, but also that of the queen of heaven. This day remained forever engraven upon their memories. They had acquired the privilege of being able to say, for the remainder of their lives: "We have assisted at the blessing of the statue of the immaculate Virgin, at the canonical foundation of the pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes; we have been the happy witnesses of this festival, which was as much as it lay in human power to make it so, the counterpart of the feasts celebrated in heaven."

On that day God shows His predilection for Rev. Mr. Peyramale and Bernadette by consigning them both to the cross, through the instrumentality of sickness and suffering. The curate had been in the thickest of the combat; it would have seemed, as though he should have enjoyed the reward; the reward

should have been granted to him according to human views.

But God was pleased to treat him as He does strong and privileged souls; He sends him as the recompense for his labors the most precious gift which He can bestow on His friends, namely, sufferings, a share in the cross of His divine Son. The priest accepts the gift of God with faith. And, from his bed of anguish, he unites himself with the triumphs of the most Blessed Virgin, and with the *Te Deum* which resounds throughout Lourdes.

As to Bernadette, who does not see that God gives her a striking proof of His love by nailing her to the cross, on this day of triumph? Up to that moment, notwithstanding the popularity she had enjoyed, she could with David, say to God: "O Lord, neither my heart nor my eyes have been elated." On this day, however, might not her humility have been exposed to danger? Had she taken her place in the procession or had she occupied a position in the neighborhood of the Grotto during the ceremony, or had she afterward retraced her steps toward Lourdes, how many proofs of veneration must she not have received! She was looked upon as an angel, as a saint; what might have been the limit reached by the expression of such sentiments!

How imposing would have been her escort from the Grotto to the hospital! The number of pilgrims being greater than ever, how many persons would have wished to see her, to speak to her! What does God do? In order to shelter her from all danger, He

keeps her fastened to the cross of His divine Son. She is at the hospital, stretched out upon a bed of sickness during this day of triumph. Instead of saying her chaplet with ineffable delight, as she was wont to do, during the apparitions, she recites it under great bodily suffering.

Whilst these joyous canticles are sung during the ceremony at the Grotto, she is saying from the bottom of her heart, with Jesus Christ: "Let it be thus, O my Father! I accept these sufferings, since they are sent to me through Thy good pleasure." May my most holy mother, Mary Immaculate triumph; such is my sole desire! And I would even wish to suffer much more, in order to procure for her this triumph.

Thus, upon this day, Bernadette preserves her humility inviolate; and by this new victory, her humility becomes strengthened for the future. Her sufferings offered to God are merits for heaven, and dispose her soul for the reception of the gifts of grace, with still greater abundance. It must not be thought, however, that, in the midst of this universal rejoicing, Bernadette remains absorbed by suffering, and that her soul is insensible to the joys of heaven.

There exists in the soul a superior region, a reserved sanctuary, where it is in communion with God. This elevated plane is as inaccessible to sufferings as it is to storms. It may be in the enjoyment of heavenly serenity and peace, whilst the body is a prey to the most cruel anguish. And, in that summit of the soul, in that inaccessible height, in that reserved sanctuary, there was no barrier between Bernadette's soul and the

holy transports which the ceremony of this day excited. Can the thought be, for a moment entertained, that the most Blessed Virgin, who, on this memorable occasion, was blessing from her sanctuary, the city of Lourdes, these countless pilgrims, and through them, France and the world, did not reserve a special benediction for Bernadette?

This angelic maid was the chosen one of her heart, her confidant—the custodian of her secrets, her faithful messenger, her embassadress, her witness whom it was impossible to confuse; she had suffered persecution in her cause; she had constantly done honor to her mission by the holiness of her life; she had retained her poverty, her humility: she was at the hospital, the humble residence of the poor, lying on a couch prepared by public charity and a prey to suffering: can it be thought that the most Blessed Virgin will not give her a share in the heavenly joys of so beautiful a day?

This divine mother recalling to life, in her presence, the panorama of all the apparitions, must have caused her to feel, in her inmost soul, what she had experienced in her previous ecstasies, and must have given her proofs of love more consoling than ever before.—She cannot have failed to repeat to her anew, even with still greater tenderness, those memorable words which conveyed to her the assurance of heaven: "And I promise to make you happy, not in this world, but in the next!"

CHAPTER VII.

1866.—Bernadette called to a religious life and received into the congregation of the Sisters of Nevers.— Her sentiments of gratitude to God.— Letter which she writes to Mother Ursula, who was the Superior of the Hospital at Lourdes, when the apparitions occurred.

Eight years had already elapsed since the 11th of February, 1858, the date of the first apparition. Bernadette had completed her twenty-second year. Her public mission in the world was fulfilled. The moment had come when God contemplated crowning all the graces with which He had favored her from her cradle by calling her to a religious life, and by enrolling her among the ranks of the spouses of His divine Son. This was the greatest favor He could grant her, after the choice He had made of her as His instrument in establishing the pilgrimage, and as the embassadress of the immaculate Virgin.

Until the day, when Bernadette was enlightened in regard to her vocation, it is difficult to realize how many persons among the laity and how many religious ladies belonging to different communities, either directly or through friends, endeavored to obtain the privilege of possessing in their midst this dearly loved favorite of the most Blessed Virgin. Certainly, nothing could be more legitimate than this desire.

Bernadette's reply had never varied: "I have not, as yet, come to any determination before God, concerning the state of life I am to embrace; therefore I thank you for the kindly interest you display in my regard."

At length, God makes known to her that He wishes her to enter the congregation of those same Sisters by whom she has been sheltered for six years.

Scarcely has she heard this interior call, before she acquaints Mother Alexandrina Roques, superioress of the hospital of Lourdes, with the fact. This lady promises to assist her in carrying out her wishes.

Sometime afterwards, bishop Fourcade, now archbishop of Aix, but at that time bishop of Nevers and superior-general of the Sisters of Nevers, came to Lourdes. Bernadette, with the deepest humility, asks of him the favor of being received into the congregation; and the bishop, as it is easy to understand, immediately grants her request.

Bernadette, in whom the light of faith was strong, appreciates the importance of the grace which God has just imparted to her. In order to show Him her gratitude, she says, with the most Blessed Virgin:— "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of His handmaid!"

Bernadette, in a letter to Mother Ursula, who was the superioress of the hospital at Lourdes, at the time the apparitions occurred, expresses, with charming candor, the sentiments of her soul with regard to the grace she had received in being called to a religious life. This letter was written in the course of the month

of June, 1866, after the inauguration of the crypt.—We give below an exact copy of the original, which was submitted to our inspection:

Letter from Bernadette, before her departure from Lourdes for Nevers, to Mother Ursula, who was superioress at the time of the Apparitions.

JUNE 15th, 1866.

My dear Mother:

Being aware of the interest you take in me, I am happy to inform you that I have, at length, determined upon entering your dear congregation. Oh! how happy would I be, could I see you before my departure; this, however, I believe will be very difficult, as I have but little time in order to make my arrangements, for I hope to be able to leave at the beginning of next month with Leontine N.....

Be so kind, dear mother, as to grant me a memento in your fervent prayers, and I ask the same favor of our dear sisters also, in order that God may make of me a holy religious, and enable me to correspond faithfully with the graces He bestows upon me.

I do not know how to thank you, dear mother, for all the kindness you have shown me; really, I feel confused every time I think of this subject: I can only pray the Father of Mercies to return to you a hundred fold all that you have done for me.

I think of you very often, dear mother, and I love to recall the day when we were in the wood-house, where you spoke to me about my vocation. How often have

I thought over that familiar conversation! It seems to me that I can still see you sitting upon one step and myself upon another; I look at them every time I go there. I do not forget you, whenever I have the good fortune to visit the Grotto. When there, I pray to our good mother to obtain for you all necessary graces. I had a very particular intention for you on the day when I enjoyed the happiness of assisting at the holy sacrifice of mass for the first time, in the subterranean church erected over the Grotto, and of receiving holy communion. Miss N.... desires me to present to you her respects and to express her best compliments; Miss Caroline N.... also does the same. Our dear mother and all the sisters here beg to be remembered to you.

Receive, dear mother, the assurance of the affectionate and respectful sentiments of your very humble and grateful child,

BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS.

CHAPTER VIII.

May 21st, 1866, Pentecost Monday—Bishop Bertrand Severe Laurence throws open to worship the Crypt or Subterranean Church, built over the miraculous Grotto—Nearly three hundred Priests and an innumerable multitude of Catholics are present and Bernadette assists at the ceremony.

The appeal of the holy bishop of Tarbes for the erection of the sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin had not only been sympathetically re-echoed, but it had also excited feelings bordering on enthusiasm. Sharing the elevated and noble thoughts of the prelate, catholics had said: Let the most magnificent edifice possible, be erected to the Virgin, and we will be happy to throw into its foundations gold enough to build it up to its very pinnacle. The architect, providentially chosen had understood this to be the intention of the bishop and of catholics; he possessed the ability necessary to carry out this superb plan. It must be said, however, that he was admirably seconded; he had, at his disposal, a population of sturdy workingmen, for the most part natives of the Pyrenees, who deemed themselves happy in laboring for the most Blessed Virgin.

Above all, heaven willed it, and all were executing God's work! Nothing therefore could be impossible. Thus, notwithstanding the most serious difficulties, the

subterranean church, destined to sustain the weight of the basilica, rose majestically above the Grotto.

In May, 1866, the works were completed.

The bishop of Tarbes selected the Feast of Pentecost for the inauguration of the new sanctuary. He wished, not without reason, that this ceremony, which was to give a greater impulse to the pilgrimage, should be attended by the greatest splendor, and therefore, he gave notice of it by a pastoral letter.

At this intelligence, universal joy was excited among catholics. The sanctuary which the bishop was about to inaugurate, was their work of predilection. On all sides preparations are made to go to Lourdes, at the appointed time, which was the anniversary of the descent of the Holy Ghost. This divine Spirit infuses a holy ardor into souls. Obstacles and fatigues are not heeded, and the journey is begun. Already, on the eve of Pentecost, all the mountain paths are crowded with pilgrims on their way to Lourdes; they travel all night, by starlight. Young mothers carry their infants in their arms, wishing that they themselves should offer and consecrate them to the most Blessed Virgin. The recitation of the chaplet, the litany of Loretto, and canticles fill the hours of this blessed night. Many priests accompany the pilgrims; but the former, prevented by sacerdotal duties from leaving their churches on the Feast of Pentecost, were unable to set out before the evening of that day.

The pilgrims all reach Lourdes safely, on Monday morning, May 21st. At the same time, the trains of

the Bordeaux railway convey the representatives coming from the various provinces of France. As soon as they are able to descry Lourdes and the Massabielle rocks in the distance, they greet enthusiastically the immaculate Virgin and the crypt erected in her honor.

Let us participate in all the affecting and divine emotions which this memorable day offers to our faith.

"On entering the city"—we quote from the annals of Our Lady of Lourdes—"the fact that this was a holiday became self-evident. Triumphal arches were erected upon the larger avenues; the houses were concealed from view by floral decorations and flags. On all sides the eye was met by legends teeming with praises of Mary. The entire city was decked with flowers."

Such is the appearance of Lourdes. Let us now follow this, the second procession, in which all the pomp attending the blessing of the Grotto, is recalled to remembrance.

"The cortege is formed in the parish church. An endless procession winds its way through dense lines of pilgrims, greeted by the chants of choristers stationed at intervals along the route.

"On nearing the Grotto, the Massabielle slope is ascended, and a striking scene is witnessed, as the multitude advance down the Western declivity.

"First in rank, leading the van, are the men, who appear marching along the graceful path which, winding four times upon itself, gently breaks the steepness

of this abrupt descent. Next follow the young girls clad in white, and all the Sodalists of the most Blessed Virgin, among whom may be noticed Bernadette Soubirous. Then come nearly three hundred priests robed in their surplices. Last of all, the bishop is seen on the height, preceded and escorted by the canons and the dignitaries of his church in Tarbes.

"At this moment the pupils of the preparatory seminary of Saint Pé, who are assembled on the opposite bank of the Gave, unite in singing a canticle. And, at the same time, various hymns are echoed on all sides, forming a confused but touching harmony. An enormous crowd come behind the bishop, along these flowery paths; in the neighborhood of the Grotto, on the rock above, and on either side of the river, every available spot is crowded by the faithful."

We have now reached the solemn moment of this great day. The immaculate Virgin has requested a sanctuary.

The bishop, in the name of the church, is able to reply:

"I have erected it; I have consecrated its altars; and now, surrounded by this multitude which represent catholicity, standing before this rock sanctified by thy presence, and at the portals of this crypt which adorn its brow as with a crown, I am about to offer the sacrifice of the lamb without stain, as the supreme consecration of the new temple.

Bishop Laurence then ascends a magnificent altar, erected in the open air, opposite the statue of the Virgin, and in full view of the immense multitude. Three

hundred priests surround the bishop. The singing of the pontifical mass begins; it is executed by the singers of the city. The innumerable catholics who are present at the holy sacrifice, unite themselves with the bishop. At the communion, they advance towards the altar to receive the Bread of Life at his hands—what a spectacle for faith!

Whilst the bishop was offering up the adorable sacrifice, and whilst he was engaged in giving communion, the immaculate Virgin, attended by legions of heavenly spirits, invisibly present, and seated upon her throne of clemency at the Grotto, opens her arms towards the entire congregation, as she had done towards Bernadette, with motherly love, and a smile of divine happiness. The miraculous fountain was gushing forth in copious streams at her feet. But at that moment, her hand unlocked, for all future ages, a treasury of graces incomparably more abundant. These, she caused to flow over the faithful souls who were present before her. It was, as it were, an effusion of the Holy Ghost upon all these people. At this solemn hour, she wished to affix her seal to so many favors. As a mother, and as the most tender of all mothers, she raised her hand in order to bless the family kneeling with filial affection in her presence. She bestows a privileged blessing upon the Pontiff, who had employed his episcopate in glorifying her, and who was rearing this sanctuary in her honor. She blesses humble Bernadette, her faithful embassadress to the church, whose soul was overflowing with joy at the sight of the sanctuary, whose building was in progress, and also at the sight

of this day's triumphant procession. She blesses these three hundred priests. Finally, whilst blessing the assembled multitudes, her hands were outstretched with clemency over all the peoples of the earth.

Thanks to this solemnity, a new era was about to dawn for the pilgrimage of Lourdes. Those who had witnessed the ceremonies, acted the part of eloquent missionaries in their respective homes.

This day was the crowning glory of the work undertaken by the bishop of Tarbes. Henceforth, the title of founder of the pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes belonged to him; for he had just established it upon a solid foundation, securing to it, for the future, every element of strength and fruitfulness, and besides the miraculous Grotto, endowing it with a sanctuary, altars upon which the Blessed Eucharist dwells permanently; the holy tribunal of penance and apostolic priests, the Pyrenean levites, selected by our Lord to guard and serve the sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin, and to exercise the functions of the ministry towards the multitude.

CHAPTER IX.

Last days spent by Bernadette in Lourdes. — Her soul occupied by the recollection of God's mercies. — Her adieu to her parents.—Last visit to the Virgin of the Grotto.— Bernadette at Nevers.—Christian death of her father and mother.

God willed, as we have just seen, that Bernadette, before leaving the city of her birth, should witness the inauguration of the crypt ; during the solemnization of which she should be, for the last time, in the midst of the people of Lourdes and of the Pyrenees, who cherish and revere her; and that she should be surrounded also by the multitudes of pilgrims assembled from various portions of France. The 21st of May was one of the happiest days of her life; it was the culmination of all her aspirations, and the crowning of her public life. On that day, she beheld the fulfillment of every word uttered by the immaculate Virgin. The sanctuary she had requested, had been reared above the Grotto. She had said: "She wished to see people there," and for eight years past, there had been one incessant stream of pilgrims. She had said:— "Sinners must be prayed for," and prayers had ascended from catholic hearts for their conversion; miraculous cures of the body were innumerable—but those of the soul were incomparably more frequent.

After the festival of the inauguration of the crypt, Bernadette would willingly have said her *Nunc dimittis*, and gladly have enjoyed her happiness in silence and solitude. This is a day however, upon which she does not belong to herself. She must therefore, for the last time, bear public testimony to the immaculate Virgin. The pilgrims wish, at least, to see Bernadette, if they cannot speak to her. A large number of persons escort her when returning from the crypt to the hospital. During the remainder of that day, and on the days following, she receives an endless throng of visitors. The pilgrims who see Bernadette and listen to her, are delighted with her candor, her humility, the wisdom of her language, and her angelic mien; they recognize her as the dearly beloved confidant of the most Blessed Virgin; they consider themselves the happier for being admitted to her presence, because they are the last who will enjoy this privilege, as in a few days more, transplanted into the retreat of a religious life, she will be invisible to the many.

At length, after this last public testimony rendered to the immaculate Virgin during the festival of the inauguration of the crypt, Bernadette is to enjoy a few days of tranquillity. Her departure for Nevers is fixed for the 24th of June, feast of St. John. In the meanwhile, she is to be wholly given up to God, and to be mistress of herself. Her soul is entirely engrossed by the recollection of the favors which God has heaped upon her.

What an immense field for her meditations, do not the fourteen years which have just elapsed afford!—

The constant protection of God, who has watched over her as over the apple of His eye; the tender and filial devotion towards the most Blessed Virgin, which the Holy Ghost enkindled within her heart, during her earliest years; the chaplets said to the queen of heaven; the graces and celestial joys which the angelical salutation in the *Ave Maria* caused to descend into her soul! Already, whilst contemplating these subjects, Bernadette's soul can contain itself no longer: "O God of my childhood, and of my early youth, what return shall I make Thee for all Thou hast done for me?"

How much broader still is the expanse of that field of meditations opened for her soul, by the apparitions of the immaculate Virgin! They are, as it were, present once more; she contemplates them successively. At each one, she beholds anew, in a manner, the unutterable beauty of the spotless Virgin; she appreciates the ineffable goodness of that Virgin toward her; she sees her motherly look, her tenderness and her smile; she recalls to mind the sentiments which that look and that beauty of the mother of God caused her to experience, and the feelings of love which this contemplation enkindled within her heart; the ecstasies into which she was thrown, and the heaven in which her soul then dwelt. She hears repeated, as it were, those messages which the Virgin charged her to deliver to the church, and those secrets which she confided to herself alone. Finally, and as though to crown so many graces and favors, she reflects upon that privilege so very rare in this world, which it has pleased God to reveal to her: The revelation of her

election to eternal glory, which she heard from the very lips of the immaculate Virgin!

In presence of these celestial representations of the apparitions, with how great an increase of gratitude does she not say: "What return shall I make the Lord for all He has given to me?"

The apparitions of the immaculate Virgin are followed by eight years of graces and spiritual favors. Here again is a new horizon disclosed to Bernadette's heart! During this time, graces and favors follow each other in rapid succession. Graces of invincible fortitude. Bernadette has always given testimony for the immaculate Virgin with a constancy equal to that of the martyrs.

Graces of wisdom: Her language has honored the cause of God, it has affirmed the truth, it has been irreprehensible.

Graces of christian humility: She always retained before God and man, her simplicity, and consciousness of her lowliness.

Graces of light: She saw everything with the eyes of faith; she saw that whatever is not God is nothing, and is worthy only of contempt; she saw, that serving God is to reign, and that the most humble in this world may be the most exalted in His service; she rejoiced in remaining lowly, in wearing tattered garments, in being nothing, for the love of God.

Graces of zeal: The words uttered by the most Blessed Virgin, "sinners must be prayed for," have been constantly present to her mind; she has prayed

with all the power of her soul, for the conversion of these unfortunate beings.

Graces for her own perfection: She beholds all that series of holy thoughts, of holy inspirations, of holy desires for the glory of God, which the Holy Ghost has caused to germinate in her soul; she appreciates the holy transports of love which He has imprinted upon her heart, and the innumerable acts of love, which, with the assistance of this divine Spirit she has enjoyed the happiness of making; she realizes the incessant aid extended by the most Blessed Virgin, who during those eight years, as it were, constantly held her by the hand; finally, her heart discovers that series of communions, in which Jesus Christ was wholly hers, and in which she belonged entirely to Jesus Christ!

In presence of all these favors received from God, Bernadette is transported with joy: "O God! hast Thou then forgotten who Thou art and who I am? And after having heaped blessings upon Thy child Bernadette, Thou preparest for her still further treasures of grace in a life of religion! O God, what return shall I make Thee for so many favors! May all the saints in heaven, all the celestial spirits, and all creatures assist me in thanking and blessing Thee! May Mary Immaculate, my most holy mother, give me her heart, in order that I may offer it to Thee, and thus return Thee love for love, during all eternity."

In this manner, glide by the last days of Bernadette's stay at Lourdes.

Before starting for Nevers, she pays a farewell visit

to her father and mother in their humble dwelling. The scene which occurs when she bids adieu to her parents possesses all the simplicity and holy nobility of faith. Their modest cottage gives evidence of the same poverty which has already been noticed.

Her parents, like herself, have honorably refused offers of gold. They are in possession of that which is of greater value than all the gold in the world—the grace of God. However insignificant they may be before men, they are great in His sight! Bernadette may love and esteem them. Soubirous and his wife have seen their child transfigured upon earth; they will contemplate her triumphant in heaven. Thus, whilst in the little room in which they meet, there is not even as much space as in the stable of Bethlehem, God is preparing for them, as a palace, the immensity of heaven, where, after a short separation, they will soon be reunited. Bernadette consoles them with this thought: "I leave you, because the divine Master calls me; but our hearts and souls remain united.

"Go often to the holy Grotto; I will always be there in spirit, and you are sure of finding me at that spot. Let us pray together to the immaculate Virgin; let us ask her to receive us into her arms, when we depart from this life, and to reunite us as a family, near herself in heaven."

At this moment God strengthens Bernadette's parents; He raises their souls unto the degree of sacrifice He demands of them; He diffuses the unction of His grace over the wound which separation causes in their hearts. Tears are shed; they are sweet however. It

is, as though God tells them in the intimacy and secret recesses of their souls, that He merely separates them for a moment, in order to reunite them in the happiness of eternity. Bernadette is endowed with the serenity and strength of an angel, but her heart is overflowing with the utmost filial tenderness. She therefore affectionately embraces her father and mother, her sister and all the members of her family, firmly confident of meeting them again in heaven.

Now, let us follow Bernadette in her last visit to the miraculous Grotto. With her chaplet in her hands, she kneels down, at the very spot from which she was wont to see the most Blessed Virgin in the hollow of the rock. At present, she is before her statue. The colloquies she addresses her, and the effusions of her soul, may be more easily understood than expressed. At this moment the entire series of apparitions is again present to her mind; although she has only the representation of the Virgin before her eyes, still in the effusion of her faith and love, she speaks to her, as though she were present, and as though she saw her face to face:

"O tender mother, whom I have seen here in thy celestial beauty, who hast so many times extended thy hands toward me, who hast, so often, attracted me to thee, by thy look and thy smile; who hast poured out of thy heart into mine a few drops of the torrent of divine happiness; who hast charged me with thy messages to the priests; who hast confided to me thy secrets concerning myself; who, finally, hast made me the most precious of all promises, that of making me

happy, not in this world, but in the next, I prostrate myself before thee, I come to recommend myself to thee! Thy divine Son calls me: Preserve me in my religious life, as thou hast preserved me here. May thy motherly look follow me, may thy protecting hand remain extended over me! I take refuge for ever in thy heart. O Mary bless me! Receive my prayers! Do thou thyself, prepare my soul for that endless happiness thou hast promised me!"

She then bows down to receive the benediction she implores.

This time, it is not from the rock in the Grotto, but it is from heaven itself, that the immaculate Virgin blesses her, who, in this world, is the pearl among her privileged children. If, in blessing her, she is sparing in external ecstasy, at least she ravishes her interiorly and fills her to overflowing with delights. Bernadette feels that she is blessed, that her prayer has been heard. She remains for several moments immovable before the most Blessed Virgin. Her heart melts with gratitude and love; sweet tears flow from her eyes. Then, rising courageously, she presses her lips to the rock, beneath the feet of the immaculate Virgin; she kisses the floor of the Grotto, washes herself at the fountain and drinks the miraculous water; then, again throwing herself upon her knees, with clasped hands, about which her chaplet is entwined, she casts a last glance upon the immaculate Virgin, which is too expressive to allow its full significance to be conveyed by language.

Finally, she tears herself away, in body, but not in

soul, from this sanctuary, which is, for her, the image, the foretaste and the portico of heaven.

On the 29th of July, 1866, Bernadette took the holy religious habit, at the mother-house of Nevers, where God has kept her unto this day, in peace and solitude. As Bernadette is still living we will not speak concerning her life as a religious; the time for this has not yet come. When the moment will be at hand, God will reveal the hidden life of His humble and faithful servant, as He has made known her public career. The life she leads in her retreat is that which Saint Paul describes to us in the following terms:

".....Your life is hid with Christ in God: *Vita vestra est abscondita cum Christo in Deo.*" (1)

The shadows, which God Himself casts around a soul which He cherishes, are to be respected; death alone may raise the veil, which conceals the secrets of this mystic life.

What we can say, is that God does not repent Himself of His gifts, and that He gives anew to him, to whom He has already given, as Jesus Christ, Himself affirms in the Gospel: "For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: *Omni enim habenti dabitur, et abundabit.*" (2) And, as God's munificence may be estimated by the gifts He has already granted, we are allowed to judge of the spiritual treasures, with which He enriches Bernadette in her hidden life, by those with which He has favored her during her public career.

(1) Col., iii, 3

(2) Math. xxv, 29.

Finally, the sacred historian has epitomized the hidden life of Jesus Christ, in these three words: "*Erat subditus illis:* He.....was subject to them." (1) We will imitate this brevity, and limit ourselves to saying that Bernadette is following in the footsteps of her divine model.

Bernadette had spent only five months at Nevers, when the most Blessed Virgin was pleased to crown Louise Soubirous, her worthy mother. And how magnificent the day and hour she selects to introduce her into glory! The day was the 8th of December, 1866, and the hour, that at which the vespers of the Immaculate Conception were chanted, for the first time, in the chapel of the crypt! Bernadette's happy mother, fortified by all the sacraments of the church, remained in a state of prayerful recollection, when a last look toward heaven announced that her soul had taken its flight.

She passes from exile into the arms of the mother of God, who presents her to her divine Son. And it is in the midst of the triumphant festival of the Immaculate Conception, that this humble woman, this happy mother, enters heaven, receives the crown of justice, and unites forever with the heavenly choirs in praising, adoring, blessing and loving God! What a venerated name she leaves in this world!

What takes place in Bernadette, on hearing of this death, so precious in the sight of God! What thanksgiving must she offer Him! What joy! My mother, whom I loved so fondly, henceforth sees the most

(1) Luke, ii, 51.

Blessed Virgin, face to face! She remains constantly in presence of her whom I could only contemplate during a few fugitive hours in this life.

Henceforward, she will not cease to intercede with her for me, to recommend me to her! The divine Virgin, who said to me: "I am the Immaculate Conception," wished to have my mother with her, on the very day of the Feast of her Immaculate Conception! O Mary, O Immaculate Virgin, eternity will be too short to thank thee for so great a favor.

Five years later, on another day chosen by the immaculate Virgin, Bernadette's father is delivered from this life of exile.

His death is neither less beautiful nor less worthy of envy than that of his wife. Here we quote the precious lines which Father Sempé has consecrated to his memory; they afford at once, the portrayal of this humble christian, and the faithful description of his last moments.

"On Saturday, March 4th, 1871, God called to Himself, Francis Soubirous, Bernadette's father. It was the thirteenth anniversary of the last day of the fortnight of the apparitions. Francis Soubirous was worthy of being the father of Bernadette, for he was a simple, straightforward, good man, and full of faith. God invested his simplicity, which was naturally timid, with courage and wisdom to resist the persecutions and seductions of those who were hostile to the Work of the Grotto.

"His faith was that of the patriarchs. No one venerated Bernadette more than himself. Being alone

one day, in the parlor of the missionaries, he knelt down before the picture representing his daughter, and began to pray fervently. The missionary, whose coming interrupted his prayer was deeply moved.

"His end was that of the just. He received the last sacraments with admirable sentiments of piety and resignation. Whilst in his agony, he joyfully pointed to the scapular on his breast. For several hours after that moment, and until his last breath, he prayed unceasingly.

"Poverty, the attendant of his life, followed him until his last hour. Present among the good people of Lourdes, of whom he was really typical, were noticable the curate and the parochial clergy, the missionaries of the Grotto, the sisters of charity of Nevers, Bernadette's worthy companions, the brothers of christian instruction, and the honest workingmen of Lourdes, who were the first believers in the Grotto, and its first apostles.

"Without doubt, the immaculate Virgin cast a glance of hope and peace on that humble coffin, in which were borne to their resting place the remains of the father of Bernadette, to whom she so often condescended to appear."

CHAPTER X.

Increase of the pilgrimages after the inauguration of the Crypt and establishment in 1866 of the Chaplains of the Immaculate Virgin.—Pilgrimage of the pupils of the Jesuits' College of Saint Mary at Toulouse, and of the students of the preparatory Seminary of Saint Pe, in the diocese of Tarbes.

The inauguration of the crypt and the establishment of the missionaries of the Immaculate Conception mark the beginning of a new era for the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, access to which now becomes easy. The Grotto is soon in railway communication with the rest of France; Spain is connected with it, through Bayonne and Perpignau. The city of Lourdes has grown in size, and it can accommodate pilgrims. But, besides these external facilities for travel and sojourn in the place, the pilgrims, from the very moment of their arrival, meet with all the assistance and with every spiritual blessing they can desire for their souls. It is not only the miraculous Grotto which is opened to them, but the crypt also, in which Jesus Christ is present in the tabernacle. Here, in this blessed sanctuary, they find confessors always ready to hear them; they assist at the holy sacrifice; they receive communion; for, from this time forth, confession and communion are universally considered by catholics who

come to Lourdes as an essential and principal feature of the pilgrimage. And each pilgrimage offers the touching spectacle of numerous guests seated at the eucharistic banquet.

The pilgrimages meet with rapid extension; first the inhabitants of the neighboring parishes come in procession. But pilgrimages are soon organized on a grand scale: owing to facilities afforded by railroads, they are made with convenience and in excellent order. All the provinces, all the cities of France, send their representatives to Lourdes in order to make profession of their filial and faithful love for the immaculate Virgin.

Following these pilgrimages, in which entire families are represented, there came pilgrimages composed solely of men. Like an army on a campaign, they can more readily endure the fatigues, and give themselves up wholly to the thought of the great grace which they are about to implore the most Blessed Virgin to grant them. True soldiers of Jesus Christ, they come with closed ranks, preceded by the cross. We will mention their pilgrimages hereafter.

Following the example of France, the other nations of Europe, Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Bavaria, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, England, Ireland, Switzerland, and Savoy send their representatives to Our Lady of Lourdes. Pilgrims come from other parts of the world and from the most distant lands. Finally America organizes a pilgrimage, and sends from the United States the elite of its catholics, in order to place the New World at the feet of the

mother of God, and supplicate her to reign as a sovereign over its inhabitants.

Here, however, we are compelled to refer the reader to the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*, in which he will be enabled to keep pace with all these pilgrimages and read detailed accounts of their occurrence. What a touching history of the mercies of God towards the catholics of the nineteenth century! What a ravishing picture of the motherly love of the most Blessed Virgin for men! What an entrance to heaven, opened for sinners! And what a plank cast before the shipwrecked to save them from the eternal abyss, and waft them in safety to the shores of bliss!

It is therefore necessary to read the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*, in order to witness the marvels of grace wrought by God, during the past twenty years, in behalf of France and of the world. As to us, we can only show the reader some of the salient points of this magnificent spectacle.

We will first mention the pilgrimage of the pupils of the Jesuits' College of Saint Mary at Toulouse, and that of the students of Saint Pé, the preparatory seminary of the diocese of Tarbes. Here are between seven and eight hundred young men, who, in the early part of June, 1869, form, as it were, the advance guard of the great pilgrimages which are to follow. The fathers of the college of Saint Mary at Toulouse desire that this religious act,—this pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes—should be well understood by their pupils, and that they should be thoroughly prepared for its performance. With this end in view, on the days pre-

ceding that upon which the pilgrimage is to be made, the compositions and exercises in all the classes have for their subjects Lourdes and the apparitions. On the eve of the pilgrimage, the pupils, at an academic celebration held in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes, extol her glories in presence of their masters, their parents, and a select audience.

The religious preparation however received even greater care than the above mentioned literary display. Instructions to the pupils, assembled in the chapel, have enlightened their minds and enkindled holy ardor in their hearts. The children make fervent confessions; they look forward to the communion they are to make at the Grotto; the moment of departure is eagerly awaited. The measure of their happiness is complete. Their parents, who were present at the literary celebration, will follow them to Lourdes, and will receive communion with them, at the sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin.

Two trains leave Toulouse before midnight, and at six o'clock, the next morning, our pilgrims march through Lourdes in procession, preceded by the college band. The singing of the litany is to be heard as the procession reaches the Virgin's sanctuary: the Grotto is surrounded by a thousand spectators, and mass begins.

It would appear as if one look of the divine mother had removed from this privileged family every trace of fatigue caused by the journey. All are happy—all pray; profoundly recollected, they unite themselves with the priest who offers up the adorable victim upon the altar.

At the proper moment, three priests present themselves for the purpose of giving holy communion, first to the pupils and then to their parents. It is now that the divine Virgin pours out her favors profusely; she seems to say to each one of her children who approaches the communion rail. "What can I do more, than place my divine Son in the centre of your heart?" A mass of thanksgiving is then celebrated, in order that these hearts united to Jesus Christ may find leisure to express to him their gratitude and love.

At the close of the holy sacrifice, the whole happy assembly rise, bow down before the immaculate Virgin, and, unwilling to lose sight of her, they go and seat themselves upon the green sward opposite the Grotto, where they partake of a family meal. Then the crypt and the environs are visited. As to the water of the miraculous fountain, all our pilgrims not only wish to drink it, but also to take some of it to their homes.

Midday was the time appointed for the rendez-vous at the Grotto. The Virgin is once more surrounded by this family which she has already blessed. Prayers, canticles, an allocution by Father Candeloup, and the benediction of the most blessed sacrament keep our pilgrims captive before the Virgin without stain. Two hours have thus gone by beneath the gaze of this beloved mother, and the time has appeared inappreciably short.

The signal for departure is given. Neither the pupils, nor their masters, nor their parents are willing, however, to separate themselves entirely from the immaculate Virgin, nor to tear themselves completely

from her presence. Besides an illustrated missal and crown, which they offer to the Virgin of the crypt, they leave, hanging before her altar, a lamp, which, burning day and night, will unceasingly repeat their prayers and perpetuate the consecration, which all have made on this day, of their persons to the immaculate Virgin, in her well beloved sanctuary of the Grotto.

On the 8th of June, the preparatory seminary of Saint Pé, in the diocese of Tarbes, takes the place of the college of Saint Mary of Toulouse, at the Grotto.

The students of this preparatory seminary occupy a historical building, replete with reminiscences, erected in a tranquil solitude. "It is," says the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*, "the ancient monastry of Saint Peter of Générest, where the disciples of Saint Benedict studied and prayed for over a thousand years." During nearly half a century the students of the preparatory seminary have been occupying the residence, wherein had dwelt formerly the children of the patriarch of the Monks of the West. This institution is remarkable for the spirit of piety and study which reigns within its walls; it is the earliest of the great works undertaken by bishop Laurence: his spirit is still living there. This house, which is in proximity to the sanctuary of Lourdes, has received the first fruits derived from the favors granted by the immaculate Virgin.

For this reason, it is difficult to give an idea of the enthusiasm with which our two hundred and fifty youthful pilgrims begin their journey, under the leadership of their professors, and of the transports of joy

with which they salute the ever Blessed Virgin as soon as they perceive the Grotto. No incident occurs to mar their happiness on this beautiful day.

At the Grotto, they meet their bishop and father, the founder of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes. The holy prelate, before starting for Rome, whither he is summoned to attend the Œcumenical Council, has desired to bless his children, and to present them himself to the most holy mother of God for her blessings. The venerable bishop offers up the holy sacrifice, upon an altar erected opposite the statue of the Virgin, and gives communion with his own hands, to these youths whom he so tenderly loves.

Too happy are they since Jesus Christ gives Himself to them, presses them to his heart, and since the immaculate Virgin, in turn blesses them from her rocky pinnacle, and gazes upon them with motherly love! All these graces are, assuredly, so many pledges and glimpses of celestial happiness!

In this manner, the pupils of Saint Mary of Toulouse, and the students of the preparatory seminary of Saint Pé, by their pilgrimages to Our Lady of Lourdes have acted the part of pioneers to their brethren of Saint Joseph-of-Tivoli, at Bordeaux, of the school of the Immaculate Conception at Toulouse and of so many others in catholic colleges who are to follow their example. This solemn act is their glory, and assures them of the protection of the immaculate Virgin. Let them be faithful in invoking her and they will realize how faithful she will be in preserving them from the dangers of the world. Saint Peter, the

prince of apostles, speaks to them from heaven, the language which he addresses to the first disciples of the Gospel:

"Honor to you therefore, that believe: *Vobis igitur honor credentibus!*" (1)

These young men from Toulouse and from the Pyrenees have comprehended that the glory of glories in this world is to serve God, to adore Jesus Christ, to be christians. For our services God alone distributes eternal rewards, and the kingdom which He has in reserve for us in His own dominion. In lieu of all the ephemeral glories and fugitive distinctions of earth, He confers upon us that supreme nobility, transcending all others, which is the power of becoming children of God and on this account, of sharing, in heaven His infinite glory.

Next to the honor of serving God, of serving Jesus Christ, the greatest honor we christians can enjoy, is to serve the most holy mother of God. Exalted to an incomprehensible height above all the hierarchies of heaven, she is seated at the right hand of her divine Son. The mother of God, is, however, our mother also. She has given us birth, at the feet of the cross, when she offered up her divine Son as a sacrifice for the salvation of the world. And Jesus Christ, nailed to the cross, has given her to us as our mother, when He uttered the divine words, which are the everlasting memorial of His love: "Woman, behold thy Son," and to the disciple, "behold thy mother!" (2)

(1) 1 Pet, ii, 7.

(2) Joan, xix, 26, 27.

It is by means of the maternal love of His most blessed mother towards us, and through our filial love for His most holy mother, that He wishes our salvation be wrought in this world; and it is by the hand of His divine mother that He desires to crown us in heaven.

Therefore, whatever concerns the veneration paid to the mother of God, who is our mother also, must be sacred for us. The prayers which the church addresses to her should take root in our hearts, and become naturalized in our souls.

We should provide ourselves with medals and scapulars bearing the impress of her effigy, and wear them as we would a buckler. By means of the chaplet and and rosary we must salute her as being full of grace; and when we say to her, "hail Mary, full of grace, *Ave Maria gratia plena*," we cause this glorious and filial salutation to ascend toward her, in unison with the entire church triumphant, as well as with the whole church militant! How happy are we in mingling our voices in this family concert! And how charming to be enabled to say to ourselves: One day we shall salute her in glory, together with all the heavenly court!

Happy, yea, infinitely happy those christian scholars who, in early youth, place themselves under the protection of the most holy mother of God, and who bind themselves to serve her during their entire life! Such filial devotion will prove an inexhaustible fountain of graces, and what is still more consoling, it will be for them, the pledge of final perseverance. For these rea-

sons, therefore, from the very beginning of their studies they frequently address her in the language of the well-known prayer:

"*O Virgo, studiis semper adesto meis!*

"O Virgin, assist us always in our studies!"

In college and out of college let them invoke her anew with regard to whatever they may have to write, saying to her with an author of the sixteenth century:

"*Ne scribam vanum, duc, pia Virgo, manum!*

O pious Virgin, guide our hands, that we may write nothing vain!" (1)

The life of the christian being a struggle, let him often raise his eyes to her in heaven, and say to her, with one of her dearly beloved servants.

"*Me semper teneat dextera, Virgo, tua!*

"O immaculate Virgin, may thy hand ever sustain me!"

Finally, so long as the combat of life shall last, let his battle and rallying cry be this noble ejaculation of faith and love:

"*Dominare nostri, Tu et Filius tuus!*

"Rule thou over us, and thy Son!" (2)

O immaculate Virgin, I desire to live and to die beneath thy standard, and beneath that of Jesus Christ, thy divine Son! Overshadowed by this double banner I am certain to conquer, and reap the palm of sanctity!

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(1) *Remigius de Gonni Navarrei jurisconsulti sæculi decimi sexti*, at the beginning of his treatise on the Immunity of Churches.

(2) Judges viii, 22.

CHAPTER XI.

FRENCH NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE.

October 6th, 1872.

The French National pilgrimage, on the 6th of October, 1872, will remain one of the most memorable events in the annals of Lourdes. This pilgrimage, as its name indicates, offers special characteristics. It is the nation, as a nation, which repairs, through representatives, to the sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin; coming to renew ancient alliance with its sovereign, and to place itself once more beneath the protecting sceptre of the queen of heaven.

And it also comes, in order to beg pardon for the past. It confesses to have been unfaithful to the most glorious mission that the power of God could grant a nation in this world, that of defending the church. With the knowledge of France, and before the eyes of the universe, orders emanating from the capital, have taken from the head of the church, Pius IX, the guard with which that nation had surrounded him, thus leaving him at the mercy of his enemies. France recognized a just chastisement by God for having abandoned the Pope, in the fact, that she has herself been abandoned in turn, and given up to a heretical power. Had she remained true to Christ and to His church, the God of armies would have been with her, and who can

doubt, that she would have gained the victory? In abdicating, however, the protectorate of the Holy See, all of a sudden her armies meet with a humiliation unparalleled in the history of the nation. Realizing that this disgrace and these disasters are a punishment of heaven, France, through her representatives, comes in order to prostrate herself at the feet of the immaculate Virgin, supplicating this all powerful mediatrix to obtain from God the pardon of her faults and errors.

She then renews, to the divine Virgin, the sovereign of the "most christian realm" her former oath of fidelity, as the eldest daughter of the church.

Such is the character and such is the mission of the French national pilgrimage.

Nothing can be more imposing than its entrance into Lourdes. This army of pilgrims advanced in regular order, counting over three hundred banners in its ranks. The whole of France was represented in this suppliant embassy of more than thirty thousand catholics; the episcopacy, the clergy, the religious orders, the dignitaries of state, senators, deputies, the army, the magistracy, the administrative officials, every rank and all classes of society.

Those chosen to perform the national pilgrimage fulfill their mission faithfully. At the Grotto, at the crypt, at the Basilica they show by their faith, their private prayers, and their public supplications, that they are there, on bended knees, in the name of France before the queen of heaven.

They renew the ancient alliance of France with the

most holy mother of God, the sovereign of the most christian realm, in the following language:

PRAYER AND VOW OF FRANCE TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF LOURDES.

"O Mary, Immaculate Virgin, Our Lady of Lourdes, thou beholdest all thy children at thy feet.

"Sent by all the departments of France, we are here to remind thee that our people are thy people, and that, obedient to thy voice, they wish to tell thee anew, that their faith and their hope are in thee.

"We come to thank thee for thy miraculous apparitions, we come to ask thee to lead us back to thy dear Son, our Lord; we come in order that thou mayest obtain pardon and mercy for France.

"We promise to become christians once more: we wish to make solemn and public reparation for the outrages committed against the divinity of our dearly beloved Saviour Jesus Christ.

"We attest the faith of France; we have confidence; Give us love, and we shall live; blot out the sorrows of our country, cause France to revive, by restoring to us our unfortunate brethren. France is still the oldest daughter of the church; she believes, she prays and thou art her queen. She is confident of her salvation, and that through thee, she will again become the old and powerful catholic nation.

"Amen. Amen."

The pilgrims depart after having accomplished their mission; but the prayer and the vow of France remain deposited by them, in the heart of the immaculate Virgin. They take leave, but all the banners of France are left behind: They are in the basilica. Lowered before the Virgin they continually repeat the prayer that France may be sheltered beneath her protecting sceptre.

May all French catholics perpetuate the national pilgrimage by their prayers, and Our Lady of Lourdes watch over France. She is all powerful and she loves us.

CHAPTER XII.

PILGRIMAGES OF MEN ALONE.

These pilgrimages of men alone to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes are a solemn confession of the catholic *credo*, and a striking manifestation of the vitality of the church; they are, like the crusaders, the deeds of God wrought through the Franks: *Gesta Dei per Francos.*

Here, we have simply to point out the advance of these new crusaders, the numbers and the date of each pilgrimage.

In 1868, Bayonne, the capital of French Cantabria, (1) sends nine hundred men to Lourdes, merely as an advance guard.

The following year, 1869, and in May, 1872, the same city sends another and still more numerous advance guard. On this last occasion, the design is to give a pledge for the general manifestation which Bayonne is to make in March, 1875.

On the 30th of June, 1870, Toulouse the holy, Toulouse, the Athens of the South of France, Toulouse, the faithful custodian of the body of Saint Thomas of Aquinas, also sends a deputation of nine hundred men

(1) "In ancient history, *Cantabri* is generally used to denote all the inhabitants of the northern mountains of Spain. *Cantabria* is the name which was given to the country they inhabited. *Oceanus Cantabricus* is the ancient name of the bay of Biscay."—*Encyclopœdia Americana.*

to Lourdes, simply as an advance guard; they bear tidings to the immaculate Virgin of the eleven thousand men who will be at her sanctuary in 1876.

On the 18th of August, 1872, the city of Cette delegates five hundred men to Lourdes. On the 25th of August, in the same year, Castres sends six hundred and forty men. On the 20th and 21st of November, 1872, more than a thousand *Vendeans* are at the feet of Our Lady of Lourdes. They represent Vendee, (1) which they consecrate to Mary. Heirs to the faith and to the sentiments of him, who has been called the Saint of Anjou, they renew their oath to serve God, the church and their country.

On the 6th of October, 1873, eleven hundred men, from the country around Nismes, congregate at the sanctuary of the Virgin. Reverend Father d'Alzon is in their midst.

On the 22d of August, 1874, fourteen hundred Basques (2) reach Lourdes. A hymn in their native tongue resounds through the air: *Agur, Maria!* What faith! This is the last advance guard of the army which is assembling in the diocese of Bayonne, and which is to be under the leadership of its aged bishop.

Finally, the first great pilgrimage is organized, and the glory attaching to it belongs to Rouergue. (3) Its

(1) A department of France, formerly the province of Poitou.

(2) Basques—the name of the Cantabri or Gascons, a people descended from the ancient Iberians, who inhabit the French and Spanish slopes of the Pyrenees. In France, they are scattered throughout the present Departments of Upper and Lower Pyrenees, Arriege, and Upper Garonne.

[3] Rouergue—a province in France, now forming the Department of Aveyron and a part of that of Lot and Garonne.

promoter is, however, the Right Reverend Bishop Bourret: at his call, four thousand men are enlisted, and together with from five to six hundred priests and their courageous bishop, they present themselves before the Virgin, at Lourdes, on the 15th of September, 1874.

The pilgrimage from Belgium reaches the spot at the same moment: it numbers over one thousand representatives from among these devoted children of the Holy See.

The action taken by the four thousand inhabitants of Rouergue is noised abroad, and is the signal for great pilgrimages.

In the spring of 1875, Bayonne fulfills its promise. At the summons of the aged bishop, from nine to ten thousand men organize and set out: they comprise the elite of French Cantabria and of Bearn. (1) Now they are at the sanctuary. The holy bishop Lacroix, not withstanding that he is eighty-three years old, is standing in their midst; he has confirmed nearly every man of them with his own hands: he now consecrates them to the Blessed Virgin.

In the course of this same year, 1875, three thousand four hundred men, accompanied by their bishop, come to Lourdes from the diocese of Carcassonne. Another time, it is the diocese of Périgueux which furnishes a pilgrimage numbering two thousand seven hundred men.

[1] Bearn—also a province of France up to 1790, when it was divided into the Departments of the Lower Pyrenees and of the Landes.

In the diocese of Auch, at the invitation of the archbishop, seven thousand five hundred men form a sacred phalanx, and proceed to Lourdes during the month of May.

This year, 1875, already so memorable in the annals of Lourdes, is to be closed by a manifestation of the most imposing and religious character. More than twenty thousand inhabitants of the Pyrenees, taken from the diocese of Tarbes alone, come, in November, to offer their hearts and their oaths of fidelity to the immaculate Virgin. Bishop Laurence, to whose fatherly care is due the formation of these manly sons of the church, looks down from heaven with happiness, upon them, and blesses them. Bishop Jourdan, who succeeded the holy prelate just named, is deeply moved at the sight of these twenty thousand catholics, who are the glory and the hope of his diocese.

In 1875, the ardor of Toulouse had received a check in consequence of the disasters caused by the overflow. Its pilgrimage of men, however, opens brilliantly the year 1876, in which Pius IX is to crown the Virgin.—Toulouse, surnamed the holy, could not be surpassed in holy zeal by other cities. Eleven thousand men spring to their feet at the bidding of the archbishop; accompanied by himself and the clergy, they reach Lourdes on Easter Tuesday, April 18th, 1876, at four o'clock in the morning. Archbishop Desprez offers up the holy sacrifice and gives communion to all. To him, as a bishop, this was one of the most memorable occasions of his life, after the definition of the Immaculate Conception and the triumph of the Vatican Coun-

cil. He then consecrated to the Virgin, the flock which Jesus Christ had entrusted to his keeping. And from this day, the protecting and sacred hands of the most Blessed Virgin were outstretched over the pastor and over the flock.

Like archbishop Desprez, bishop Legain of Montauban, (in whom, with all his devotion to the Holy See, bishop Doney appears to have come back to life,) experienced heavenly joys when he presented, on the morning of September 21st, his clergy, his seminary, and his three thousand men to the immaculate Virgin. He is surrounded by them as though by a well-beloved family; when offering up the holy sacrifice at the altar erected opposite the Grotto, he says to them after the Gospel: "How good it is for us to be here—this Grotto is Mount Tabor!"

We cannot describe these pilgrimages—we must limit ourselves to the mere figures. Here are already more than sixty thousand men at the feet of Our Lady of Lourdes! They confess the faith of their ancestors —they are nourished with the bread of life. They form so many hearts purified, ennobled by the grace of God, and become, through holy communion, the temples of the living God. After having received Jesus Christ, their Saviour and their God, they consecrate themselves to the immaculate Virgin, His mother, they place their faith and their souls under her protection.

The Virgin says to all: "*I am the Immaculate Conception;*" that is to say, the Virgin of victory, the Virgin who, from the very first instant of her existence, crushes, with her conquering heel, the serpent's

head, It is in vain that he will endeavor to strike you with his fangs, to harm this most christian kingdom, which is consecrated to me. I am the Immaculate Conception, that is to say, victory itself. With my immaculate foot, immeasurably more terrible than lightning, I will hurl him into the depths of the abyss. Remain faithful to me, and you will advance from victory to victory, and, conquering the world and hell, you will finally reach my divine Son and myself, and we will crown you with our own hands!

It is impossible to conceive or to express the weighty importance of the religious action performed by these men, for the purpose of turning the scales used by God in connection with eternity. They go back to their firesides, with renewed christian life, blessed by God and the immaculate Virgin; they convey all these treasures to their families, whose ancient traditions are revived and strengthened anew. These memories are imperishable, and the sweetest in life: until the end of their days each one will say joyfully: "I formed part of the great pilgrimage of men!" What an example, what an inheritance to leave their descendants, and all the members of their families!

The twenty thousand men from the Department of the Upper Pyrenees, who went in pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes, have immortalized the souvenir of this great action in the following manner.

"The diocese of Tarbes," as the annalists of Our Lady of Lourdes inform us, "has brought to a conclusion, at Rome, its magnificent manifestations of faith, on the 8th of November, 1875. The names of its *twenty*

thousand male pilgrims were inscribed in a splendid album, ornamented and illuminated with remarkable taste and art, by means of paintings, drawings, and photographs, which relate marvelously well the religious history of the cities of Bigorre, (1) and of its numerous sanctuaries dedicated to the mother of God.

"Notwithstanding the general poverty of this part of France, and the little leisure enjoyed by its inhabitants, sixty pilgrims from Bigorre go to Rome and deposit at the feet of Pius IX, the album, the Peter's-pence, and a beautiful address by the bishop of Tarbes, testifying how dearly beloved is the Vicar of Christ—the infallible Doctor of faith—the Pontiff of the Immaculate Conception!

"In reply to the discourse of the Rev'd Mr. Nogaro, arch-priest of the cathedral of Tarbes, Pius IX said:

"It is a new and great consolation for my heart to see before me these pious clergymen and these devout pilgrims who have the happiness of living beneath the shadow of a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin, which, in the hands of God is the instrument of daily prodigies, dispensing graces, and lavishing proofs of mercy upon the catholic world."

This language, and the blessing of Pius IX that followed, are for the pilgrims and the entire diocese of Tarbes a treasure of inexpressible value, which will be handed down in families, from generation to generation!

[1] *Bigorre*, province of Gascony, between Bearn and Nebouzau—Tarbes is its capital. The other principal cities are Vic-Bigorre, Ibos, Antin, *Lourdes*, Luz, Campau, Bagneres, Bareges, St. Sauveur. Bigorre now forms the principal portion of the Department of the Upper Pyrenees.—Bouillet's Dictionary.

CHAPTER XIII.

PILGRIMAGE FROM THE UNITED STATES.

June 2nd, 1874.

When the immaculate Virgin blessed, at Lourdes, the multitudes prostrate at her feet, she also blessed the entire catholic church scattered throughout the universe. Her apparitions were a favor which embraced the globe. They formed a broad stream of grace, which was to flow over all the regions of the earth.

Thus, notwithstanding the distance, the United States of North America experience the effects of this blessing and of this stream of grace. The American catholics understanding the merciful purpose of the apparitions, eagerly invoke the Lady of Lourdes, and erect altars in her honor. This, however, is not sufficient for their faith and devotion.

They conceive the noble project of going in pilgrimage to her sanctuary, in order to place under her protection, the church of the United States. An elite body of pilgrims is organized. A bishop and priests are at their head. They cross the ocean, and reach Lourdes. At the feet of the immaculate Virgin, they salute her with the flag of the United States, which they leave suspended in her sanctuary. As the representatives of their brethren, they supplicate the immac-

ulate Virgin to take under her protection, forever, the church in the United States. Such is the beautiful and holy mission, which they come to perform.

We quote from the annalists of Our Lady of Lourdes. Their recital will permit us to assist at the touching scene of this pilgrimage.

"On the evening of the 2nd of June, the most extraordinary pilgrimage which has up to the present time, glorified Our Lady of Lourdes, makes its appearance.

"The entire community of the Basilica, and some other clergymen all robed in surplices immediately advance to meet the procession.

"Here is AMERICA!

"There are only one hundred and five pilgrims. They march majestically, in double file, bearing two banners. They are chanting the MAGNIFICAT. No pilgrimage, even amongst the most imposing, by their numbers, ever excited such deep feeling. America, the United States, two thousand leagues distant, carrying their solemn homages to the Virgin of the Pyrenees; the youthful catholic church of that country singing the Virgin Mary's *Magnificat*, here, in the centre of old France, and teaching Europe, upon her own shores, how to believe, how to affirm, how to pray! Can anything be conceived more eloquent?

"This pilgrimage is presided over by the Right Reverend Joseph Dwenger, bishop of Fort Wayne, Indiana. The entrance of the pilgrims is greeted by joyous notes of welcome pealing forth from the grand organ of the basilica. The two banners are placed,

one at each end of the communion rails, and sacred anthems are chanted when the procession comes to a standstill. The bishop then advances to the altar railing in order to address the pilgrims. Deeply moved and with overflowing heart, he speaks of the sanctuary of the apparitions, in which, at last they are all united.

"He reminds them of the difficulties of the undertaking, congratulating himself upon its successful issue, which is due to Mary; and at the close we hear him praying with intense fervor to the immaculate Virgin, the most holy mother of God. His discourse is followed by the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, after which, the procession repairs to the Grotto, where the Americans remain for a long time absorbed in prayer, and engaged in scrutinizing every detail connected with the spot.

"In this American delegation, there are thirty clergymen, and from fifteen to twenty ladies and young girls. The greater part of the pilgrimage is therefore composed of about fifty laymen, all of whom are fervent catholics; we are told that few of them are men of fortune; several indeed have made considerable pecuniary sacrifices, in undertaking this journey. All have undergone great fatigue; and all, the youngest girls not excepted, have courageously borne the inconvenience of so long a voyage. A lofty conception of faith is their only motive. Their only desire is to visit the spot where the Immaculate Conception has manifested herself, to bear the homages of America to

the Holy Father, to show themselves catholics in the face of the world.

"When admiration was expressed to a priest, who had been a missionary in Indiana for thirty-eight years, that the difficulties incident to such a voyage had been overcome, he replied:

"I have come, only with the hope of obtaining the grace of a holy death."

"A young man brought a golden heart offered by the catholics of the State of Columbia. Another was the bearer of a silver crown, from that country, the gift of a group of negroes attached to a confraternity founded by a paralyzed priest.

"On Wednesday, the Americans assist at the mass said by their bishop, and they meet again, in the evening, for another religious ceremony. Bishop Dwenger, with paternal simplicity and touching cordiality exhorts them to thank the Blessed Virgin, and to obtain from her fidelity to the grace of God, in spite of all temptations.

"At half past four o'clock the next morning, the bishop ascends the altar, to celebrate the mass of farewell and give holy communion. Shortly after, the entire noble caravan begin their journey to Rome, leaving behind them, however, a commemorative banner, having on one side a painting of the immaculate Virgin, and on the other, the following inscription:

"OH OUR LADY, IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF LOURDES!

"Pray for thy grateful and confident clients, who send thee this homage from the United States of America, by the hands of the first American pilgrimage.

"May, 1874.

"The banner has never been disturbed from its place in the corner of the sanctuary, where, from its isolation, it attracts the notice of visitors. It bears witness to one of the most beautiful events of this century. It attests that great deeds are wrought in the midst of the perverse works of the age; that God has preserved some noble hearts, despite our unworthiness, and that the most amiable immaculate Mary is still powerfully loved on earth.

"On beholding America thus represented at the sanctuary of Lourdes, the conviction naturally arises, that the prodigies wrought at this place are visibly divine, and that Providence cannot but have in store, great triumphs and the complete restoration of the dominion of Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XIV.

Some of the principal Sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes in the Catholic universe.—Sanctuaries in Europe.

The immaculate Virgin had said to Bernadette: "I desire to see people here." As she is the mother of the regenerated human race, she would fain have convoked her entire family to this sanctuary of grace and clemency. At her maternal invitation, catholics have hastened to Lourdes from all parts of the world, and the pilgrimages have been unceasing.

The divine mother is however well aware, that many of her children being in foreign countries, whole nations cannot come to her at Lourdes. What then is the plan, which her maternal tenderness has devised? She will go herself unto these people, establishing in their midst her habitations in temples which will be an extension of her sanctuary at Lourdes, and, as it were, its annexes and auxiliary chapels, in which she will be as lavish of favors and miracles, as at her principal shrine.

How happy we would be, were it in our power, to lay before the reader, in this place, a complete historical tableau of all these different sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes scattered throughout the world!—Such an undertaking would however exceed the limits we have assigned to this book. We will therefore be

compelled to restrict ourselves to a short summary embracing only a few leading features.

Nevertheless, however abridged our recital may be, it will show us the advance made by Our Lady of Lourdes in her progress towards nations, and the extension and establishment of her Pyrenean sanctuary in their midst.

It is a wonderful fact, that among the children of the mother of God who are unable to come to her, is to be numbered the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, who governs the entire church, who is the custodian of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, who has defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, as being a dogma of faith: Pius IX, in a word, is unable to go to Lourdes! Like Saint Peter, he is a prisoner at Rome, where however his captivity is of longer duration. He can see with the eyes of the flesh, neither the Grotto of the apparitions, nor the miraculous fountain. What does the queen of heaven do in behalf of him who has glorified her and who is a prisoner for Christ's sake? She causes Lourdes to draw nearer to the Vatican—she comes to Rome. In his holy prison, Pius IX greets her with emotions of filial love. To honor her, he selects the most august sanctuary in the Vatican, a reserved spot, to which the Pope alone has access and where the most blessed sacrament is kept. There, beneath the gaze of the immaculate Virgin, he was wont to communicate with her divine Son touching all the interests of the church. At the present time it is Leo XIII who prays in his stead, or rather, who prays in unison with Pius IX, now rewarded in heaven.

Thus, the most august sanctuary possessed by Our Lady of Lourdes in the catholic universe, is that which Pius IX has erected to her, in the Vatican at Rome, Italy, which, owing to the Rome of the popes, is the mistress of the universe, and was destined to be the classic land of devotion towards the Blessed Virgin. And because it was, owing to the Rome of the popes, the mistress of the universe, God reserved for it that most precious of all the sanctuaries of the Virgin, the one which witnessed the fulfillment of the mystery of the Incarnation, and which God caused His angels to transport to Loretto.

How great is the devotion throughout Italy to this sanctuary! and how intense the ardor in that country to erect temples in honor of the most holy mother of God! Who can enumerate her effigies venerated under the name of *Madonnas?* Where is the city, and where is the hamlet, each not possessing its own?—Therefore, it is not at all astonishing that the Italy of the popes should have joyfully welcomed the devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. Following the example of Pius IX, the Italian catholics were stimulated by a holy rivalry in doing honor to the Virgin of the Pyrenees; they wished to have images and statues of her, and miraculous water from her fountain—how many of them came to her sanctuary! The private oratories erected in her honor by families and religious congregations are beyond enumeration. But, besides these private oratories, Italy has built public sanctuaries to her. That of Naples is one of the most celebrated.

On the 8th of May, 1874, Our Lady of Lourdes took possession of Naples. The sons of Saint Vincent of Paul consecrated to her a magnificent chapel in their church of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. Father Altavilla, of the Society of Jesus, had been the orator of Our Lady of Lourdes at Naples; his eloquence had rendered all hearts submissive to the immaculate Virgin. In order to give additional splendor to the inauguration of the devotion in her honor, Father Altavilla preached a *triduum*, and felt authorized to say to his immense audience, that the most Blessed Virgin had given proof of her all-powerful influence with God, by means of miraculous cures. And from that day, Our Lady of Lourdes continues to reign over Naples by her clemency, her sweetness, her blessings, and the profusion of the graces she bestows.

The signal privilege granted this sanctuary has endeared it still more to the piety of the faithful. On the 3d of July, 1876, the very day on which Pius IX crowned Our Lady of Lourdes, the immaculate Virgin was crowned at Naples. The church of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino was magnificently decorated. The sisters of Saint Vincent of Paul had adorned with rare taste, the Grotto where the immaculate Virgin was to be seen in the niche, with Bernadette kneeling before her.

The most Reverend Spaccapietra, primate of Asia, Vicar Apostolic and Archbishop of Smyrna, presided over the ceremony. Father Altavilla, as we learn from the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*, delivered an address remarkable for its doctrinal points, its power

and its faith. His excellency, the primate, spoke in turn, pronouncing a touching allocution. The orator was moved to tears which excited those of the assembly. The solemnity was brought to a close by a solemn benediction and the TE DEUM. During the *triduum* which followed the feast, an immense concourse of the faithful pressed their way to the feet of the Virgin bearing her crown.

The capital of Piedmont also desired to have a sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in one of its principal churches. There, the mighty as well as the humble come and pray with confidence. And there too, as at Naples, she causes to be felt the effects of her all powerful influence with her divine Son.

The city of Palermo has also distinguished itself through the homages it has rendered to Our Lady of Lourdes, and it may be said, that the catholics throughout Sicily are animated by an ardent rivalry to do her honor.

May the immaculate Virgin cast a look of clemency and love over the whole of Italy in return for such great homage! May she cover with her sceptre, the Rome of the popes, that focus of divine light for all the peoples of the universe!

From the sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes in Italy, let us pass to those erected to her by France. This nation has deserved the appellation given to her by the popes, of the most christian kingdom, and of the eldest daughter among nations submissive to the church. For that very reason it was incumbent upon her to excel, and to place herself in the front ranks of devotion

toward the most Blessed Virgin. And indeed, she has proved herself so faithful in honoring the mother of God, that the kingdom of France has been called the kingdom of Mary: *Regnum Galliæ, regnum Mariæ.* How many basilicas, how many churches erected in her honor! How many sanctuaries celebrated for her apparitions, and become centres of pilgrimages! The names of these basilicas, of these sanctuaries are present to the minds of the reader, we need not enumerate them here. It is in this most christian kingdom, that the immaculate Virgin has condescended to appear, in the middle of this century, and that she has chosen for herself a new sanctuary, whence she will pour forth graces over the whole world.

Catholic France hastening to this new sanctuary, has bowed down with filial dispositions, before the most holy mother of God. But as many French catholics cannot go to the Pyrenees, the divine mother takes pleasure in causing them to find Lourdes in those sanctuaries which represent the miraculous Grotto in which she appeared.

It was meet that the capital of the most christian kingdom should possess one of these sanctuaries. The most Blessed Virgin was pleased to establish it at the church of the Gésu, Sevres street, in the following manner: Towards the end of November, 1872, a person who had been to Lourdes, had promised the most Blessed Virgin to place twelve statues of herself in oratories or chapels. One evening this person came with one of these statues to the church of the Gésu, and asked permission of the sacristan to place it be-

neath the altar of Our Lady of the Seven Dolors, in the very position it now occupies, and his request was granted. Such is the humble origin of the pilgrimage which has been established in this chapel. Neither the resident fathers, nor the person who offered the statue entertained the slightest suspicion of what has since occurred.

The beautiful month of the Immaculate Conception was about to open. Our Lady of Lourdes has scarcely taken possession of her new and humble sanctuary, when she finds herself surrounded by eager throngs.—It was admirable to see how an uninterrupted stream of people poured forth their invocations to the mother of God, during all hours of the day. The concourse of the faithful increased, and already, in the early part of December, the little grotto in this church of the Gésu afforded a representation of the Grotto at Lourdes.—From morning until night, tapers were burning there amidst a profusion of flowers and plants; the crowd never seemed to diminish, and the enthusiasm was exceedingly gratifying! It may be said, that from the 8th of December, 1872, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the pilgrimage was an established fact.

In return, the immaculate Virgin opens, without delay her treasury of graces, and causes her all-powerful influence with God to be felt. Already, on the 8th of December, on the very day of the feast of her Immaculate Conception, she miraculously restores to health the mother of a family when she was expected to breathe her last sigh. The *ex voto* is in the chapel; the marble slab being inscribed as follows: *Gratitude to Our Lady*

of Lourdes for my cure, 8th December, 1872. L. B.

It is to be remarked, that in the church of the Gésu, the most Blessed Virgin selected for her dwelling a chapel, where repose at her right hand the bodies of five magnanimous confessors of Jesus Christ, who were cruelly put to death during the Commune, through hatred for the name which they bore: Peter Olivaint, Leo Ducoudray, Alexis Clerc, Anatole de Bengy, John Caubert. These sons of Saint Ignatius repose there, in a chapel consecrated to the martyrs of the Society of Jesus. Thus, the gaze of Our Lady of Lourdes is turned towards them. They died for the cause of her Son; she desires to give them a proof of her love, by placing alongside of their tombs this new throne of grace, from which she repeats the marvels of the Grotto of Lourdes. To all who repair thither and invoke her, she seems to say, pointing with her right hand to the resting place of these five heroes of the faith: "Imitate their courage; be faithful to my divine Son, and, if need be, give your lives for Him."

Besides, the Virgin has selected a central spot in Paris, to which catholics may have easy access, in order to pray to her, and where she may lavish upon them her graces and favors.

Indeed, she has hardly taken possession of her new sanctuary before miracles begin. Dating from the one wrought on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and of which we have just given an account, they have continued to the present day. The *ex votos* in the chapel attest the truth of this statement; not only the marble slabs bearing inscriptions, but also the many

golden hearts which shine in the grotto, are monuments of gratitude destined to perpetuate the remembrance of miraculous cures. We will merely relate two of these, in which the intervention of the most Blessed Virgin was manifest.

The first is that of a child aged two years. His mother was among the number of those who cultivated devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, in the church of Gésu. Her child is taken suddenly ill; notwithstanding the physician's care, the disease assumes more aggravated features, and all hope is soon lost. The symptoms of death are depicted upon his countenance; the little boy appears doomed to die! In the height of her grief, the mother is inspired to have recourse to the water of the miraculous fountain of Our Lady of Lourdes, of which a small quantity is obtained in the neighborhood, from a clergyman who brings it himself. On seeing the child, he cannot help exclaiming:—"Here is an angel, who is only waiting to be blessed, ere winging his flight to heaven!" Still, his icy-cold lips are gently opened; and one or two drops of the water have hardly penetrated into his mouth, before the child suddenly comes back to life. He is, as it were, raised from the dead, in presence of several witnesses. For tears, thanksgiving is substituted. The child's cure is complete—and in a short time his mother, in the full transport of gratitude, goes to present him to Our Lady of Lourdes, through whom his life was miraculously restored, and she deposits, in the chapel, an *ex voto* with the inscription: *Gratitude to Mary, who has saved my son, January, 1876. M. H.*

The goodness and sovereign influence of the most Blessed Virgin are not less marked in the cure of a young orphan girl, aged about twelve or thirteen years, who was an inmate of the orphanage directed by Sister Basile, in Paris. This child had a terribly diseased leg, whose condition soon became so grave, that five physicians were unanimously in favor of amputation. The Superioress caused them to give her in writing an expression of opinion accordingly. Science holding out no hope, she hastened to the church of the Gésu; she prostrates herself in presence of Our Lady of Lourdes, and, with tears in her eyes, she supplicates to be spared the pang of having the advice of the physicians carried into effect. Together with her entire community, she begins immediately a novena for the cure of the patient. On the ninth day there was no change in the child's state, and she suffered greatly whenever it became necessary to lift her from one bed into another. Humanly speaking, amputation was more necessary than ever. The most Blessed Virgin wished that all earthly hopes of cure should vanish to render her power more manifest. The poor orphan had prepared herself to receive communion on the closing day of the novena. The priest brings her the blessed sacrament. O power of the merciful Virgin! At the very instant that the child receives her God, she is radically cured, and not the slightest trace of disease remains. After giving thanks, she rises, and with Sister Basile and some of her companions, she repairs to the church of the Gésu; where all kneel before Our

Lady of Lourdes, thanking her gratefully for the miracle she has just wrought.

The church at Toulouse situated on the street *des Fleurs*, and belonging to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, also contains a sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Grotto is placed in the first chapel to the right on entering, exactly as in the church of the Gésu at Paris; but there is this difference, that in Toulouse the Grotto occupies the entire chapel, and its proportions are the same as at Lourdes.

There is no exaggeration in saying, that this Grotto is worthy of the christian temple in which it is situated, and which is admired as one of the celebrated monuments of this century. It is the work of two brothers, Henry and Augustus Bach, the one architect and professor of the faculty of Toulouse, the other, a Jesuit father, and a great painter. The entire architectural design was supplied by the former, and everything connected with the inspiration, which adorns the walls and the dome of the church with paintings was due to the latter. Their souls as christians and artists were fraternally united for the creation of this magnificent temple erected to the glory of God. Happy brothers whom divine grace, rather than nature, renders inseparable; they will go down to posterity together, and together will enter the kingdom where God crowns those who have labored for His glory!

This new sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes was scarcely inaugurated before the concourse of the faithful transformed it into an exact representation of the

Grotto in the Pyrenees. Tapers are constantly burning and there is prayer unceasing at this shrine, where novenas are made, and where the immaculate Virgin is found to be as motherly and lavish in distributing graces, as at Lourdes.

One sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes did not suffice, however, for the holy city of Toulouse. On the 4th of February, 1877, the clergy and the faithful of the parish of Saint Nicholas opened, in their church, a new and magnificent sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin. It is a work of art; one would imagine that the Grotto of Lourdes had been removed to Toulouse so faithfully are the proportions kept, and attention observed to the surroundings. This monument is due to the talent of Mr. Cassaing, a sculptor at Toulouse. A wooden statue of the Immaculate Conception, one metre, seventy centimetres in height (1) is placed in the hollow of the rock and its benevolent gaze is directed towards the faithful who come to pray to the Blessed Virgin. Bernadette, in a kneeling posture, with her eyes fixed upon the Virgin, holds a lighted taper in one hand, and her chaplet in the other. Near Bernadette appears the fountain bearing the inscription:

"*Go and drink at the fountain, and wash yourself in it.*"

And on each side of the Grotto, the mural paintings complete the illusion by showing in the background, the scenery in the neighborhood of the rock of the apparition. These two paintings are the work of Mr.

(1) It will be remembered that the metre composed of one hundred centimetres is equivalent to 3 feet, $\frac{371}{1000}$ inches English measure.

Alexander Serres. Finally, two carvings, in basso-relievo, due to Mr. Fabre, a sculptor at Toulouse, represent the apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes to Bernadette, and the miraculous cure of a dying child. All honor to these christian artists, who by throwing life upon canvass, and giving animation to stone, are apostles, in their way, and exalt Our Lady of Lourdes. The immaculate Virgin will remember their families and themselves.

Montpellier has endeavored to surpass Toulouse in glorifying Our Lady of Lourdes. The faithful find the sanctuary of the Grotto reproduced in the new church belonging to the college of the Jesuit fathers. It must be said, for it is a subject of glory, which is due to the inhabitants of Montpellier, that this sanctuary takes rank among those which are destined to be the most admired. The citizens intended that christian art should bring Lourdes into their midst, and the artists to whom the carrying out of the design was intrusted, have splendidly realized the expectations entertained with regard to their efforts. On beholding their work, it is difficult to believe that the Pyrenees and the Massabielle rocks are not really present. What a consolation for those souls, who contributed towards the erection of this sanctuary !

The immaculate Virgin takes renewed possession, as it were, of the city, and opens to its catholic population, an inexhaustible supply of graces.

Our Lady of Lourdes possesses a sanctuary in the Cevennes, (1) where she is graciously pleased to

(1) "Cevennes or Sevennes; a chain of mountains in the South of France, considered by some a branch of the Alps, by others, of

bestow upon these mountaineers, the same blessings she confers upon their brethren in the Pyrenees. The apostolic zeal of a priest, the curate of Gravières, in the diocese of Viviers, procured the erection of this sanctuary.

In the centre of a deep hollow, surrounded by lofty mountains, there rises a mound, on which is built a battlemented Romanic tower, fifteen metres high, visible from a distance of ten kilometres. (1) At the top of this mound, a large statue of Our Lady of Lourdes is to be seen; the Grotto containing an altar, is at its foot. The priest who celebrates the holy sacrifice of mass at this altar, can be seen by twenty thousand persons.

The new sanctuary, blessed and inaugurated on the 8th of December, 1874, with the approval of the bishop of Viviers, has become a centre of pilgrimages, to which religious communities, pupils of boarding schools and inhabitants of the neighboring parishes come in procession. The pilgrims hear mass and receive communion. On the evening of the 15th of August, 1876, six thousand persons, among whom there were a good many protestants, formed a torchlight procession, which was headed by thirty priests. A dominican

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the Pyreness. They are connected with both, and extend also to Auvergne. The highest summits are the Puy de Dome, 4960 feet high; the Cantal, 5964 feet, and two other elevations above 6000 feet high. Encyclopædia Americana.—This section of France was the scene of the bloody war of the *Camisards*, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This war lasted from 1685 until 1704, when it was brought to a close by Marshal Villars.

(1) Four kilometres make one French league.

father, from Carpentras, preached a sermon from the top of the tower.

It is a question of extraordinary graces, obtained through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes at Gravières. The entire surrounding country is deeply moved by the miraculous cure of a religious lady belonging to the community of Saint Joseph des Vans. The new sanctuary is particularly an admirable focus of spiritual graces, at which the neighboring people rekindle their faith and the piety of olden times.

The country which gave to the church blessed Peter Le Fèvre, the first priest of the Society of Jesus, and Saint Francis of Sales, bishop of Geneva, has signally displayed its faith by the public homage rendered Our Lady of Lourdes. The catholics of Savoy have erected in her honor deeply venerated sanctuaries, at Viruz-Faverges, Savigny and Entrevernes, and there are other shrines besides.

Switzerland has built a sanctuary to Our Lady of Lourdes at Fribourg, that noble and catholic city, which had the blessed Peter Canisius for its apostle. This son of Saint Ignatius was one of the most shining lights of the Council of Trent, and one of the saviors of catholicism in Germany, during the sixteenth century. He founded the college of Friburg, where he ended his mortal career, and where his holy body is preserved. In him, Switzerland venerates one of its most powerful protectors.

Not long since, in the year 1878, more than twenty thousand catholics came in pilgrimage to his tomb, to testify, in presence of the universe, that they looked

upon this great man, as their father and apostle. "O blessed Peter Canisius," they exclaimed with accents of faith and love, "always be our protector! Defend us against heresy; like our fathers, we wish to live and die catholics!"

This solemn profession of faith uttered by catholic Switzerland has rejoiced the entire church.

It can now be understood that Our Lady of Lourdes should select the city of blessed Peter Canisius, wherein to establish her throne of clemency, whence her favors are to be scattered broadcast over all the catholic people of Switzerland. She not only lavishes graces upon the children of the church, but she also extends her blessings, and pours out the assistance of divine light upon protestants. A large number of these have been converted, have abjured heresy, and have publicly returned into the bosom of the church. This is only a beginning; for the immaculate Virgin will extend her conquests, and bring back to the faith of their fathers, whole legions of these, our unfortunately separated brethren. And why should the Swiss populations, those valiant races, be deprived of the divine treasures of catholic faith, which their ancestors possessed for so many centuries? May Our Lady of Lourdes bring about this happy return! May she prove as powerful and as merciful among the Alps, as she has shown herself to be in the Pyrenees!

Spain has shown herself worthy of all her past history, in the reception she extended to Our Lady of Lourdes. This nation, evangelized by Saint James, possesses the most renowned sanctuary of the Virgin

in the West, that of the apparition of the blessed mother to this great apostle; this sanctuary is at Saragossa and known throughout the universe under the name of Our Lady *del Pilar*. In the Pyrenees too, Spain venerates the celebrated sanctuary of Our Lady of Montserrat. Andalusia, owing to its love for the mother of God, has acquired the glorious title of Country of the most Blessed Virgin—*Tierra de Maria Santisima*. Saint Dominic, by means of the holy rosary, spread the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, not only in Spain, but in the entire world. Besides Saint Dominic and so many other saints, this beautiful kingdom has given to the church the three greatest saints of the last few centuries—Saint Ignatius, Saint Francis Xavier, and Saint Theresa. Never did any country combat longer and more heroically in order to conquer its soil for God and His Christ; from Pelagius (1) to Saint Ferdinand, one continued crusade struggled for the delivery of Spain from the yoke of the Moors. The Spaniards of the present time are the descendants of those races of heroes and martyrs, who have transformed their re-conquered country into one of the most important sections of the church of Jesus Christ. The

(1) Pelagius, king of the Asturias, was the lance-bearer of king Roderic (last king of the Goths) at the battle of Xeres de la Frontera in 711. After the defeat and supposed death of Roderic, Pelagius assumed the leadership of the christians who had taken refuge in the Cantabrian Mountains, where he remained several years unknown to the conquerors. Suddenly leaving his retreat, he defeated the Moors at Cavadonga in 718, and in several other encounters. He then assumed the title of king and founded Oviedo. Pelagius is one of the heroes of Spain.—(Bouillet's Dictionary.)

popes have named Spain the catholic kingdom. In the Vatican Council, Spain, through her bishops, proved herself as great as at any previous period of her history; her bishops shone with great lustre, owing to their learning and devotion to the Chair of St. Peter.

With such glorious antecedents, is it astonishing that Spain should have bowed down with so much faith and love before Our Lady of Lourdes? The illustrious Spanish people desired to have a national pilgrimage of their own; their representatives came to the sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin, and begged her to preserve their faith in Spain; thence, they went to Rome, in order to present Pius IX and Saint Peter with a protestation of the everlasting fidelity of their country. Does not this action, on their part, afford the assurance that the future of catholic Spain will be no less brilliant than the past?

We will only mention here, the sanctuaries erected to Our Lady of Lourdes in the capital of Spain.

The church of Saint Ignatius on Prince street, at Madrid, possesses one of these sanctuaries. A very beautiful statue of the immaculate Virgin appears in the hollow of the rock.

There is an altar in the Grotto, at which the holy sacrifice of mass is celebrated. On the 8th of December, 1876, Father Martin, of the Society of Jesus, established in that church, an association of young ladies, whose object is to honor the most Blessed Virgin, and cause her to be honored. This association is now in a very flourishing condition, both by the number and the regularity of its members. In the year 1878,

the month of Mary was celebrated in this church by an extraordinary concourse of the faithful.

The Grotto was too small to contain all the tapers that were offered for the purpose of being lighted. Sermons are frequently preached there, and the new sanctuary of the immaculate Virgin is always filled to overflowing.

It is in this church of Saint Ignatius, that the inhabitants of the Basque provinces meet for the celebration of their religious festivals.

In the parish of Saint Martin, one of the most celebrated in Madrid under the administration of the Benedictine Fathers, there is another sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, larger than that of the church of Saint Ignatius. The statue of the immaculate Virgin is most remarkable. Here too, frequent sermons are preached to crowds of devout persons; and, on the part of the most holy mother of God, are given unceasing proofs of her motherly love and her all powerful influence over her divine Son.

In the great district of Madrid, called that of Salamanca, at Saint Andrew of the Flemings, a new church is erected, which also possesses a sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Finally, this devotion has been inaugurated in the chapel of the bishop of Madrid.

Catholic Ireland has been second to no nation in her devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. How many have been the pilgrimages made by the sons of Saint Patrick to her immaculate Grotto!

Not satisfied with proofs of this kind however, they

have just erected a magnificent sanctuary in her honor.

On the 9th of June, 1878, Pentecost Sunday, the dedication of a new church in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes took place at Kilreecle, in the diocese of Clonfert. Bishop Duggan, surrounded by a number of clergymen, presided at the ceremony, the magnificence of which fully met the expectations of the people. Reverend Father Thomas Burke, the Dominican, one of the most celebrated orators this century has produced, electrified an immense audience. This day, recalled to mind the most beautiful celebrations at Lourdes.

Are we not authorized to believe that the immaculate Virgin has established her throne in the centre of Ireland, in order to reward the "Isle of Saints" for her secular devotion, and for the solemn testimonial of love given shortly before, when that magnificent and monumental lamp was offered, which is kept burning before her altar at Lourdes?

This remarkable act of faith on the part of Ireland deserves to be known by all catholics. It is alluded to in the following terms by the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*:

"A beautiful ceremony occurred on Sunday, September 10th, 1876.

"Noble and catholic Ireland was represented at the Grotto, by a deputation worthy of her. For some time past they had entertained the pious thought of offering to Our Lady of Lourdes, a lamp which in her blessed sanctuary should burn night and day; it would be a continual prayer for their beloved country. A

generous rivalry facilitated the procuring of this offering. His eminence, Cardinal Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin, had encouraged the originators of this noble idea. To Mr. William Thompson was confi led the mission of offering the lamp, together with a green silk banner richly embroidered, and displaying the likeness of Saint Patrick, the apostle of Ireland.

"The offering of the *ex voto* took place solemnly after the mass, which was celebrated at the Grotto, for the Irish. Reverend Father Cuddehy, of the diocese of Dublin, presented the lamp and the banner to Our Lady of Lourdes, and delivered an address expressive of Irish feeling in her regard. The superior of the missionaries returned thanks for the gift, which was elegant in every respect; he congratulated the Irish upon their faith, charity, patience and devotion.

"In further development of this thought, at vespers in presence of an immense audience of catholics from every country, he lovingly congratulated the Ireland of O'Connell, for her invincible faith during centuries of persecution, for her charity, which embraces and conquers the world, for her patience, her obedience, and her christian fortitude, which nothing could overcome; he congratulated the Irish for having thereby given to the whole universe, the beautiful sight of their conquest of religious liberty, which is the source of all true freedom.

"The most Reverend Doctor Errington, Archbishop of Trebizond, Monsignor Capel, the rector of the Catholic University of London, and some other English

Catholics were happy to join in the ranks and to be associated with the sentiments of their Irish brethren.

"The lamp from Ireland is suspended at the basilica, opposite the tabernacle of the main altar. It is deserving of this post of honor on account of its intrinsic value and workmanship, as well as of the sentiments of the people by whom it was offered."

CHAPTER XV.

Sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes in Europe continued —Belgium—Holland—Poland.

Belgium is one of the countries in which devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes has spread with the greatest rapidity, and where it has taken deepest root. In this devotion, as in the case of the Peter-pence, and the number of its Pontifical zouaves, the Belgian nation occupies the front rank. How many pilgrimages to Lourdes!

The large centres and the country are stimulated by zealous rivalry. All the large cities have erected sanctuaries to Our Lady of Lourdes. Antwerp has three, one at the cathedral, another at the church of Saint Joseph, and a third at the church of Saint Armand; this last is especially frequented by sailors. Liege, which witnessed the so strikingly miraculous cure of Mr. Hanquet, has two of these shrines, the one at the church attached to the residence of the Jesuit Fathers and the other at the church of the Blessed Sacrament.

Brussels, Malines, Namur, Courtrai, Charleroi, Bruges Verviers, Ghent, Tournay, Mons, and other cities have made a point of honor to erect sanctuaries, to Our Lady of Lourdes. As to private oratories, they are innumerable.

Without doubt however, the most celebrated of the Belgian sanctuaries is that of Oostacker, near Ghent.

For this reason, we deem, that the greater glory of God requires we should make it known.

The "*Precis historiques*," published at Brussels having dwelt at length upon this sanctuary, we will give a condensed account of the recital furnished by the above mentioned authority.

"In 1870, an eminent christian lady, the Marchioness Alphonse de Courtebourne, conceived the desire of having an aquarium in the park of her country seat at Oostacker.

An architect at Ghent was commissioned to furnish the plan. Upon the approval of the design presented by this gentleman, the location of the aquarium had still to be chosen. A spot was selected in the middle of the park, at a place called the hermitage. As this name and this spot recall family souvenirs, let us pause, for an instant, in the midst of our narration.

"The country seat of the Marchioness de Courtebourne is situated in a hamlet of Oostacker called Slootendriesch. Mention is made of it as far back as the year 694, in the charters of the abbey of Saint Bavon, wherein may be read the statement, that Childela, a monk made a donation of a tract of land, to the abbey, about that time.

"*Selantis, in pago Gandensi, super fluvium Legia.*"

Towards the close of the last century, this tract of land belonged to Francis, Baron of Plotho, Baron of the Holy Empire, (1) who had married Reine de Beer,

(1) The Holy Roman Empire was the title under which the German Empire was known from the tenth century, until its extinction in 1806.

Baroness of Meulebeke. They had a son named Francis, after his father, and a daughter called Theodora, who married Eustathius, Count of Calonne, marquis of Courtebourne, and the father-in-law of the present Marchioness.

"Francis, called by God to a higher destiny, left the world, and entered a convent of the monks of La Trappe. His health could not, however, withstand the austerities of the cloister. He returned to his family, was ordained priest, and withdrew to Slootendriesch, where he had a hermitage built in the park; here he remained until the end of his days, in solitude and silence, given up to prayer and contemplation of heavenly truths. He appears to have belonged to the class of fire and sword penitents; and it is related that while kneeling at the foot of the crucifix, he was often heard to cry out whilst striking himself with a bloody discipline:

"'Penance, penance!"

"It is indeed remarkable, that this very hermit, who was so greatly detached from the world, for whose vanities and wealth he entertained such a contempt, should have built the present mansion of Slootendriesch, although he never lived in it himself; his only motive in doing this was to give employment to the working class, whom the French revolution had reduced to want. He died onthe 15th of December, 1811, looked upon as a saint, by his family, who venerated his memory with tender and affectionate piety.

"It was within the circle of this hermitage, in which her holy uncle had formerly dwelt that the Marchioness

wished to have her aquarium built. The construction was begun on the 18th of June, 1870, but the work was not completed until about the middle of 1871.

"The building was nearly erected, when, one day, the Curate of Oostacker, accompanying the Marchioness who desired to show him the progress which had been made in the execution of her design, proposed that an image of the Blessed Virgin should be placed amidst the artificial rocks of the aquarium. This idea pleased the Marchioness. The architect was ordered to prepare a niche above the entrance to the Grotto, and here was placed a statue of the Virgin in the posture and costume described by Bernadette Soubirous.

"In 1873, the Marchioness was anxious that the Virgin of her aquarium should be blessed; this favor was granted to her solicitations. The Curate of Oostacker was charged with the mission of blessing the statue. The inhabitants of the village were invited to be present, in order that the ceremony might be invested with additional splendor. The park was closed at night, as usual, and the Virgin, who had been for a little while exposed to public veneration, was withdrawn to the customary solitude of the place.

"The good villagers of Oostacker had however seen the grotto and the statue. At that time, all Belgium was excited by the reports of the miracles which the Virgin obtained from her Son in favor of those who invoked her at Lourdes. The statue at the aquarium was a faithful copy of the one honored on the banks of the Gave..... The Marchioness was therefore requested to open her park to the inhabitants of the vil-

lage, in order that their devotion might be satisfied. The desired permission was granted on Sunday afternoons, from one to five o'clock, and during these privileged hours, the Virgin was visited by great numbers of people."

The providential time was at hand. Contrary to all expectations—to all human foresight—Our Lady of Lourdes takes possession of this hermitage, consecrated by the fervor and the penitential deeds of a magnanimous christian, and she reveals the fact that she has entered into possession, by striking miracles. The pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Oostacker is founded—people come to it from all parts of Belgium, as they had done at Lourdes, whither they came from the Pyrenees and from the whole of France: the pilgrimages are composed of ten and fifteen thousand catholics. These pilgrimages follow each other, and as the most Blessed Virgin lavishes her favors in this new sanctuary, the fervor of the pilgrims increases constantly; Mary receives them with open arms, and they find Lourdes at Oostacker. A gothic church, with ten side chapels, each of which contains an altar, has been erected, as also a residence for the missionaries built upon the plan of that of Lourdes; the fathers of the Society of Jesus reside there, and they are busied, one may say, almost night and day in hearing the confessions of the pilgrims.

In less than four years, of the auxiliary chapels of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes now existing throughout the world, that of Our Lady of Oostacker has become one of the most beautiful.

Here, we will relate only the two miracles mentioned in the '*Precis historiques.*'

At Lourdes, it will be remembered, one of the first miracles wrought by the most Blessed Virgin was the cure of Louis Bourriette, a laboring man and the father of a family. We find that so, at Oostacker, one of the earliest miracles is the cure of another laboring man, who was also the father of a family.

Peter Rudder was the name of this man; he was born on the 2nd of July, 1822, at Jabbeke, a small village in Western Flanders. He was a servant of Viscount Alberic du Bus de Guisignies, a senator. Peter Rudder, when he fell a victim to a frightful accident, had three children, of whom Sylvia, the oldest, had reached the age of fifteen years. On the 16th of February, 1867, as Rudder was on his way home, after having completed his day's work, he met two woodcutters, who were busy felling trees alongside of the highway, and he entered into conversation with them. Suddenly a sharp snapping sound is heard. Rudder endeavors to get out of the way, but it is too late: his right leg is caught between the trunk of a tree lying on the ground, and one which falls with a loud crash. Thus grasped, his leg is crushed, besides being broken. In this condition he is taken to his house at Jabbeke, and surrendered to the care of his wife. Doctor Affenaer, of Oudenberg, is the first to attend him, without however being successful. He is afterwards treated by several other physicians, all of whom assert the accident is irremediable.

This state of things lasts from February, 1867, until

April, 1875. It would seem as though God took pleasure in prolonging the patient's life, so as to compel the physicians to declare, for eight years, that science is powerless to cure the wounded man, and that they are astounded at the miracle wrought in his favor.

About this time, Peter Rudder hears mention made of Oostacker, and he feels strongly impelled to implore the assistance of the most Blessed Virgin, in honor of whom, with his wife and children, he begins a novena. On the ninth day he starts for Ghent, accompanied by his wife, whilst his daughter Sylvia lights a taper before an image of Mary, which she had purchased with her savings. For the sufferer, the journey was to prove as painful as was the road to Calvary. Although he left home at four o'clock in the morning, yet he did not reach the railway station until seven o'clock. It took three men to lift him into the railway carriage..; he reaches Ghent, whence he takes a conveyance to Oostacker.

At last he is in front of the Grotto. The jolting of the vehicles has exhausted his strength. Although worn out by fatigue, yet with the assistance of his wife, he falls, rather than sits down, upon a bench in the neighborhood of the chapel. He is thirsty: his wife gives him to drink some of the water of the fountain. Feeling strengthened after a short rest, he takes his crutches, and praying with unutterable fervor, he goes three times around the holy image; then he returns, and takes a seat more in the background, in order to prevent the pilgrims, who are very numerous at that moment, from jostling his leg. He and his wife pray

together. All of a sudden, Peter faints away; he is taken with vertigo, and is, as it were, beside himself; he rises, without heeding his crutches which had been thrown down on the ground by his side, and without which for eight years he had been unable to take a single step; he starts, passes through the ranks of the pilgrims, and kneels at the feet of the Virgin. Then, suddenly coming to himself again, and seeing that he is kneeling thus, without crutches, he exclaims: "O my God, where am I? Mary!—Mary, thou hast saved me!" He runs, seizes his crutches, which are henceforth useless, and which, with an impulse of gratitude, his eyes bathed with tears, he suspends at the feet of the Virgin. "Peter, Peter, O Peter, are you cured?" cries out his poor wife, distracted with joy, and clasping him in her arms. Peter, however, could not answer: he was choked by his feelings; all he could do was to cry. He again went three times around the Grotto unassisted and without even using a stick. It was indeed true—Peter had been suddenly and radically cured. He uncovered his leg: all traces of the two wounds had disappeared; the fractured bones had suddenly become united; a small blue spot alone remained to indicate the place of the fracture which has been described.

Peter returned that very day to Jabbeke. It is not intended to describe either the emotion with which the entire population of the village were filled, or the happiness of poor Sylvia on the occasion. Rumors of the cure came to the hearing of Dr. Affenaer, who hastened to the cottage of the Rudders. Peter, however, had

just gone out to see some friends. The doctor followed and met him. He could scarcely believe his eyes: he examined the leg with anxious care, and, old practitioner as he was, he began to cry. "Peter," said he, "your leg is as fresh as that of a child. Ah! if I was an unbeliever, this alone would suffice to make me believe."

Here is another fact. It is chosen because of its occurrence, as it were, in the bosom of the Faculty.

Doctor Nevejan, a physician of Thourout, had seen his wife suddenly stricken with complete blindness, in the year 1874. This terrible affliction had befallen her after a whole year of suffering and sickness. At first he entertained some hope of curing her, and he treated her, with the assistance of his father, Doctor Nevejan, of Eessen; this hope was, however, of short duration. Mrs. Nevejan was then confided to the care of the most celebrated Belgian and German oculists. Then Doctor Libbrecht, of Ghent, treated her, but remedies proved unavailing.

The eye was widely open for the reception of light, which, however, did not seem to penetrate its depths. A lighted candle, abruptly presented to the eye, failed to cause winking. The patient's condition rapidly grew so much worse, that she received the last sacraments. The physicians declared that death was near, and even were its advent delayed, dissolution was none the less inevitable. Mrs. Nevejan, however, did not cease invoking the Blessed Virgin.

Since the 9th of September, 1874, she bathed herself daily with the water of Lourdes. She would have

wished to visit the Grotto of Oostacker, in person, but her condition to do so was such as to preclude the possibility of the attempt. Her sisters and her grand niece made the pilgrimage in her name; when they returned, she said to them: "No, I shall not obtain anything, unless I go there myself." "Oh! if I could see my children!" she sometimes cried out, with an expression that God has only granted to mothers.—Her children! She had three of them, including her little Louis, the angel, who obtained his mother's cure, and Ferdinand, her youngest, whom she had barely been able to see for a few days.

There was a slight improvement in Mrs. Nevejan's general condition, in which, however, her eyes had no share; for there was not the slightest ray of light to dispel the dark shades into which they were plunged.

One day little Louis came to inform his mother, that a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes had been erected at Eessen. "Let us go there, mama, the Blessed Virgin will restore your sight." They made the pilgrimage to Eessen; but the prayers of the mother and child were unsuccessful. Mrs. Nevejan then made up her mind to repair to Oostacker; her husband seriously opposed this design; a journey of the kind being dangerous for the patient, to whom it could not be allowed with prudence.

Mrs. Nevejan succeeded in overcoming, or at least, in allaying this opposition, which was, in every respect, reasonable; and on the 13th of May, 1875, she started for Ghent, accompanied by her mother-in-law, her sister Mary, little Louis and her two nephews.

The journey was sad and painful; finally, however, the pilgrims reached the Grotto. Little Louis ran to the feet of the Virgin, and began to pray with such angelic fervor, that he attracted the attention of all the bystanders. He was kneeling near his mother, one step, however, closer to the Virgin. All of a sudden, this interesting child, stretching his little arms into the shape of a cross, cried out with a loud voice: "O dear Blessed Virgin, give mamma her eyes back again!"

Then turning to his mother, "mamma, do you not see yet?—"No, Louis," answered his mother. Thereupon the child began anew, always in a loud voice, and in tones so suppliant, so sincere, and so heartrending at the same time, that he caused every one to shed tears: "Dear Blessed Virgin, dear Blessed Virgin give mamma back her eyes again!" An hour glided by "Mary," said Mrs. Nevejan to her sister, "I am suffering very much from my head." "Perhaps you are about to be cured," was Mary's reply. No, the cure was still not obtained. It was soon time to leave. The poor blind woman then said: "Blessed Virgin, are you going to let me go back as I came?" Little Louis continued praying, ending each prayer with the exclamation: "Dear Blessed Virgin, restore mamma's sight." Turning around again towards his mother, he repeated the question: "Mamma, do you not see?" She then dipped her handkerchief into the water of the fountain, and washed her eyes. "My God!" exclaimed she suddenly, "I see my white handkerchief." And completely bewildered, she covered her eyes with

her hands: "I am cured, I am cured!"—"Oh mamma, mamma, are you cured?" interruped little Louis. And he threw himself around her neck, nearly smothering her with tears and kisses.

A few moments later, Mrs, Nevejan, herself read the litany of the Blessed Virgin out of a prayer book.

A telegram was immediatly sent to Thourout, apprising Dr. Nevejan of the happy tidings, and then the pilgrims prepared to return home. At the station of Zedelghem, half-way on the route, Dr. Nevejan entered the railway carriage, in which his wife was seated; he had no sooner received the news before he hastened to meet her. I will describe neither his joy nor his grateful tears. The train reached Thourout at seven o'clock —the news had spread all over the place—a large crowd was patiently awaiting the arrival of the little band of pilgrims. Mrs. Nevejan, was surrounded and congratulated on every side. All of a sudden, she utters a cry: She has just perceived the nurse carrying in her arms, her little Ferdinand; she springs forward seizes her youngest child, whom she may hardly be said to have seen before, and presses him tearfully to her breast.

It is impossible to describe how touching this scene was. She addresses the child with all the terms of endearment a mother's heart can suggest, and in the meanwhile, Mr. Nevejan, whose soul was overflowing with emotion exclaimed at this spectacle:

"O, my God, I believe, I believe!"

It is unnecessary to make any addition to the unvarnished recital of these two cures. The account given

of them is sufficient to prove what has been written at the beginning of this chapter: "If pilgrimages take place at Oostacker, it is a sign that they were ordained from on high! It is not man, but God who has chosen this spot in order that He may here manifest His power, and the dominion He exercises over nature."

Our Lady of Lourdes has also taken possession of Holland; the immaculate Virgin takes this means of rewarding that country for all it has done for the church, in this century. Straightforward and generous Holland has opened its eyes to the light, and it comes back to the old faith of its fathers.

The return of this country, to the catholic church, has been so admirable, that twenty years ago, it could be said the number of conversions exceeded the most sanguine anticipations. And among the converts are to be found men who are an honor to Holland.

In the succeeding years, the movement towards the church, far from lessening has on the contrary gone on increasing. Soon, one-half the population will be catholic.

Holland has displayed its filial love for the Holy See. Besides its liberality towards the Peter's pence, it sent twelve hundred and twenty-four Zouaves to Rome. One diocese alone, that of Haarlem contributed six hundred and eighty-nine men, of the total number just enumerated. How great the heroism they displayed on battle fields! They were true soldiers of Christ and of His vicar. The blood of their

martyrs which was spilled, will bring forth an abundant harvest of new christians.

Holland consoles the church by its episcopate and its clergy, who are deeply devoted to the Holy See. To it belongs the glory of supplying foreign lands with missionaries, and religious communities with numerous subjects. It has given the Society of Jesus one of its generals, the most Reverend Father John Roothaan of celebrated and blessed memory.

All these deeds of Holland and the noble aspirations of its people towards the catholic church, were as a powerful appeal made to the intercession of the immaculate Virgin; could she resist desires which were so dear to her own heart? She therefore came in their midst, and the new sanctuary which she chose for her residence, was established in the following manner.

As a souvenir of his pilgrimage to Lourdes, a catholic Hollander had a grotto constructed in his country-house, which was situated at a short distance from Maëstricht. In November, 1874, the curate of the parish, in the midst of a large assembly, solemnly blessed the grotto and the statue of the immaculate Virgin, which was placed in the niche. This served as an impulse to the neighboring population. The concourse of people became so great, that it was necessary to build an outside chapel, in which the pilgrims might satisfy their devotion, without trespassing upon the owner's private property. The bishop of Ruremonde, having visited this sanctuary, was so deeply affected by the devotion of the people, that, on the 3d of November, 1875, he granted an indulgence for visiting

the grotto. Besides himself, several other prelates came hither, to pray before the immaculate Virgin. And what will forever remain a title of honor for this chapel, is the fact, that Pius IX himself was graciously pleased to bless and endow it with an indulgence, which favor was granted on the 30th of September, 1875. Thus it happened, that this sanctuary began to be a centre of pilgrimage. On Sundays, especially, it was crowded with people, and the pilgrims may be counted by hundreds. All wish to provide themselves with medals, pictures, rosaries and other pious articles. They also ask for the miraculous water of Lourdes, to take home to the sick; and, in this regard, as the family of the owner have taken the precaution to procure a large quantity, they distribute it generously. Here, in this remote corner of the province of Limburg, the immaculate Virgin condescends to lavish graces and favors as freely as she does at her sanctuary of Lourdes.

In this connection, it is necessary to soar to the most lofty heights of faith. The most Blessed Virgin came down from heaven, in the middle of this century, and manifested herself at Lourdes, only in order to bring about, in the world, a return of nations to God. She has caused these words to reach them: "Penance, become converted!" "I am the Immaculate Conception, that is to say the Virgin of Victory!" Thus it is, that in establishing for herself a dwelling place in Holland, she brings with her a treasure of blessings for that country, in whose behalf a new era of graces and light has dawned. She desires to bring the whole nation

back to her divine Son. She takes the entire people under her all-powerful protection, and intercedes for them; she will assist the apostles who are to evangelize Holland.

Our Lady of Lourdes, moved by the faith and the misfortunes of Poland, has desired to establish herself at Cracow, the capital of that country. She condescended to select the church of the Sons of Saint Vincent of Paul as her residence. Here, in the sanctuary erected in her honor by the Poles, she freely distributes graces and favors. Her Polish shrine is a touching image of her sanctuary in the Pyrenees.

Devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes is wide-spread throughout Poland. There, as elsewhere, the water of the Grotto performs a great number of miraculous cures. How many Poles have made the pilgrimage to Lourdes, whither they repaired, in order to pray to the immaculate Virgin on behalf of their beloved country.

As an evidence of its faith, Poland has presented Our Lady of Lourdes with a banner which, offering to the eye a compound of the symbols of mourning and hope, is deposited in the sanctuary of the basilica, where it supplicates the immaculate Virgin to become the DELIVERER of Poland.

CHAPTER XVI.

Sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes in America.—Canada, United States, Nicaragua, Brazil.

The French element in Canada has taken the leading rank in devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, whom catholic families in that land universally honor. Pictures of the immaculate Virgin, the water of the miraculous fountain, and books treating of Our Lady, are treasures for that country. Several Canadians have come to Lourdes; representing their brethren, they placed their dear Canada under the powerful protection of the immaculate Virgin.

The Canadians desired to possess an imposing and faithful representation of the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. This work was prepared by a very skillful artist whom they had sent to Lourdes for that purpose.

"For the last few days," we read in the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*, "there has been on exhibition at the Mayoralty in this place, a plan in relief, representing the Grotto and the city of Lourdes, with their picturesque surroundings. This plan covers one hundred and fifty superficial feet. The ingenious and patient artist who executed this remarkable work, was sent from Canada for the purpose. Those, who are unable to come from that distant land as pilgrims to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, desired to have this

work brought to their country, so as to behold with their own eyes, and to lay their hands upon as faithful a representation as possible of the Grotto upon which the feet of the spotless Virgin rested.

"We were already aware of the devotion of the Canadians to Our Lady of Lourdes. These worthy children of France, always devoted to the mother country, to the church, to the Pope, and to the mother of God, unite with ourselves in hoping that the immaculate Virgin will save her *Kingdom of France*—the church and the world."

Already in 1871 the city of Montreal possessed a sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, forming a small, but charming chapel, in the basement of the church of Saint James. Although this chapel is but dimly lighted and under ground, as it were, yet a large number of persons daily meet there to pray; and especially on Sundays. It is impossible to conceive anything more beautiful or more touching than the faith, the fervor and the recollection of the thousands of pilgrims, who repair to this spot, in order to appeal to the immaculate heart of the queen of heaven. They are really children surrounding a good mother who does not weary in hearkening to their supplications. And in this modest sanctuary, as at Lourdes, the immaculate Virgin performs prodigies of conversion, and pours forth spiritual favors in unbounded liberality.

The Canadians also enjoy the happiness of being constantly represented at the sanctuary of Lourdes, by two most eloquent symbols, a heart and a banner, through whose instrumentality, they consecrate their

persons and their country to the immaculate Virgin, under whose keeping they remain. Let us again listen to the annalists of Our Lady of Lourdes:

"Two pilgrims arrived from Canada, on the evening of July 18th, 1873. They were two worthy sons of Reverend Mr. Olier. (1) The Sulpitians of Montreal, who are so zealous for good works in Mary's Canadian city, sent to Our Lady of Lourdes a very large and beautiful silver-gilt heart, a true symbol of that of Canada, always so devoted to the church, and to most christian France, and a splendid banner which, hanging in the chapel of Saint John the Baptist, the patron of Montreal, is very much admired.

Our Lady of Lourdes may be said to have taken possession of the whole of America. Let us speak of the States forming the Union in North America.

In 1874, as we have seen, the catholics of that dis-

(1) Mr. Olier, curate of the church of Saint Sulpice was born at Paris in 1608 and died in 1657. In 1641, he established at Vaugirard a society of priests whose mission was the instruction of young clergymen; and the members of this society were subsequently known as Sulpitians. Mr. Olier became curate of Saint Sulpice in 1642, and in 1646, he undertook to build the present celebrated church of that name in Paris, as well as the well known adjoining seminary. He established Sulpitian seminaries in France, besides, others in Canada. American catholics refer to the Sulpitian seminary in Baltimore. Mr. Olier was the author of several pious works, among which may be mentioned: *Explanation of the ceremonies of High Mass, 1655; Treatise on Holy Orders, 1676.* He and Saint Vincent de Paul were friends. A characteristic of Mr. Olier's life was his veneration for the New Testament, which was so great that he had a copy magnificently bound and covered with silver. [This note is extracted partly from Bousillet's Dictionary the remainder being compiled from other sources.]

tant country organized a pilgrimage. A great many of them crossed the ocean. In the name of the United States, they offered to Our Lady of Lourdes the magnificent banner, which is now to be seen in the basilica. By this action the deputies of the American Union placed their country beneath the sceptre of the immaculate Virgin.

In nearly every State in the Union, altars are to be found dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. There are but few catholic families in which there is not always on hand an abundant supply of the miraculous water. Novenas are often made for the purpose of obtaining conversions or cures, and marvelous facts are related, which are the result of the confidence entertained by the faithful in the power of Our Lady of Lourdes.

This confidence is especially manifest in Louisiana, and at New Orleans, the capital of the State.

A great catholic demonstration by virtue of which Our Lady of Lourdes was declared the patroness of Louisiana, took place in New Orleans, on the 8th of December, 1873, Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

On that memorable day the archbishop, the clergy, the religious orders, and the faithful dedicated a sanctuary to the immaculate Virgin, in the cathedral of New Orleans. This shrine, by its proportions, and the statue of the Virgin offers a faithful and imposing reproduction of the miraculous Grotto of Lourdes.

The solemnity was preceded by a *triduum*. The same divine afflatus which stirred up the population at Lourdes, also manifested its influence in Louisiana,

impelling the people towards the Cathedral at New Orleans, so that the sacred edifice is frequented by catholics at all hours of the day. On the occasion of the great festival of the 8th of December, 1873, however, the church was filled to overflowing by the faithful, of whom, six thousand are estimated to have gained access within its precincts, whilst from twelve to fifteen thousand more occupied the adjacent streets and Jackson Square.

Surrounded by a deeply moved audience, the archbishop, consecrating the archdiocese of New Orleans and the whole of Louisiana from the pulpit, makes use of the following language:

"O Mary, conceived without sin, who hast wished to confirm the dogmatic definition of the glorious privilege of thy Immaculate Conception by the numerous prodigies wrought at the Grotto of Lourdes, desiring to honor thee, and to invoke thee in a special manner, under this title of Our Lady of Lourdes, henceforth so dear to all catholics, prostrate at the base of this monument which has been erected in thy honor, as a feeble testimonial of confidence and love, we all unite in this act of consecration to thee.

"In my name, in that of the entire clergy and of all the faithful, I consecrate to thee this archdiocese, which has always glorified in being devoted to thee.

"Notwithstanding our unworthiness, O Mother of Mercy, renew in our favor those miracles which thou hast wrought in behalf of our brethren, who were doubtless more deserving than ourselves. Direct towards us, O Mary, one of those powerful and merciful

glances, which are an inexhaustible source of graces and blessings. Grant that sinners may be converted, that the just may be strengthened in faith and in the practice of our holy truths, and obtain for all, the precious gift of final perseverance.

"Avert, from our so sorely stricken State, the chastisements which are inflicted upon us by the justice of God, too often aroused by our iniquities, in order that, grateful for the temporal and spiritual favors which we will owe to thy maternal protection, we may, each day, serve thee with redoubled zeal and fresh fervor, until, at last, we shall, all together, contemplate and bless thee, with thy divine Son Jesus, in the splendor of a glorious eternity. AMEN."

The immense throng, with transports of joy, uniting with the archbishop, proclaimed Our Lady of Lourdes the Patroness of Louisiana!

During these triumphal days, at least fifty thousand catholics came and prostrated themselves before the most Holy Virgin.

This imposing ceremony produced a deep impression even upon protestants. A remarkable article, which was published by one of the secular newspapers, "*The New Orleans Times*," comparing this event to the Council of Ephesus, to the consecration of Hungary and that of Austria to the *Great Lady*, views it as a proof of the wonderful vitality of the catholic church.

Finally, the immaculate Virgin has condescended to establish, in the capital of the United States, a centre of pilgrimage and for the divine action of grace upon souls. The children of Saint Dominic, fired by the

apostolic zeal which they inherit from their glorious founder, and, like him, jealous to popularize throughout the world, devotion to the most Blessed Virgin, hastened to erect a sanctuary to Our Lady of Lourdes in their church at Washington. The immaculate Virgin had hardly made her appearance upon this, her new throne of clemency, before she found herself surrounded by an immense family, delighted at beholding the image of their mother, who, at her rock in the Pyrenees, multiplied miracles and showered graces profusely. This feeling was comparable to a holy fire which spread from soul to soul. The preaching of the Dominican Fathers contributed powerfully towards the extension of this ardent devotion. The new sanctuary at Washington became, at last, a centre of pilgrimage. The immaculate Virgin welcoming with maternal tenderness and inexhaustible clemency her dearly beloved catholics of the United States, renewed, in their favor, the miracles of Lourdes.

A special privilege granted by Rome was destined to render the consecration of this new sanctuary complete in the eyes of the people. On the 3d of July, 1876, the very day upon which Our Lady of Lourdes was crowned by Pius IX in the Pyrenees, she was also crowned at Washington. This festival was attended with unparalleled splendor. There was an immense multitude of catholics present on the occasion. The memories of this day are imperishable, for it is one of the most glorious dates in the history of the church in the United States.

Let us pass from the Union of the States in North America to Central America.

The city of Leon, in the Republic of Nicaragua, placed itself in the keeping of Our Lady of Lourdes. The fathers of the Society of Jesus erected a sanctuary in her honor in their church. This shrine has become a centre of pilgrimage, to which the inhabitants of the neighboring countries repair, and where the pilgrims approach the sacrament of penance and receive communion, as though they were at Lourdes. On a festival of the Blessed Virgin, four thousand catholics knelt at the communion rail. Thus, it pleases the immaculate Virgin to pour forth at Leon, in Nicaragua, that overflowing stream of graces, which she caused to spring up at Lourdes.

Rio de Janeiro, the capital of the vast empire of Brazil, has esteemed it a privilege to erect a sanctuary to Our Lady of Lourdes. Seated on this throne of clemency, the most Holy Virgin outstretches her protecting hand, and dispenses blessings upon all the various peoples scattered over this immense extent of territory.

At the foundation of this sanctuary, the Virgin demonstrated the truth of the language she had uttered at Lourdes:

"I am the Immaculate Conception," that is to say, the Virgin who crushed the head of Lucifer the serpent—I am the Virgin of Victory. At the same time God showed His sovereign power, by making manifest the manner in which He humbles, and with a thunderbolt strikes down Satan and his partizans.

The corner stone of the monument dedicated to the Virgin was scarcely laid, before hell was seized with consternation. Being unable to conceal its vexation and rage, it brought all its power to bear for the destruction of the new sanctuary. By an impious audacity, such as hell and Satan alone could inspire, men were found sufficiently depraved to put the apparitions of Lourdes upon the theatrical stage, coupling this sacrilegious act with a torrent of blasphemy against the immaculate Virgin; against Jesus Christ and His church, against the clergy, against religious orders and christian virgins.

These scenes, by which hell threw down the gauntlet to heaven, were enacted during the days which precede lent. Such blasphemies and such sacrileges were however, destined to receive their chastisement not later than at the very beginning of that holy season. The scourge of the yellow fever made its appearance with such violence, that it became necessary to conceal the numbers of those who died, in order not to terrify the living. And the avenging Nemesis singled out its victims, sweeping away first the sacrilegious actors, their leader, their accomplices and their abettors.

Whilst, however, the impious and the blasphemers were appearing before the divine tribunal of justice, the most Blessed Virgin was manifesting her influence and mercy with regard to catholics, who invoked her. The cures were innumerable, as to the christians who fell victims to the scourge, they died with admirable dispositions, recommending themselves to Our Lady of

Lourdes. Yellow fever raged until the month of June when the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the prayers of the faithful succeeded in disarming divine justice.

The inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro made the solemn reparation to God and to the immaculate Virgin. The acts of reparation which were made at the capital, did not however, suffice for the zeal of this noble hearted population, which decided upon organizing a more imposing demonstration. The ladies of Brazilian society, having at their head the bishop of Rio de Janeiro, repaired to Lourdes in pilgrimage, in order to beg pardon of the Virgin for the sacrilege committed at their capital, and to place the whole of Brazil under her powerful protection.

The memorial gift which they deposited at the shrine of the immaculate Virgin, testified to their generosity, their faith and their filial veneration.

Devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes spread from the capital to the provinces. A great number of oratories have already been erected in her honor. Christian families are happy to possess water from the Grotto of Lourdes. This water effects astonishing cures. The immaculate Virgin causes these children of the catholic church, who invoke her with faith, to realize that she is all powerful with God and that she is the sovereign dispenser of His gifts; finally, that she is the mother of grace and mercy.

Mention will be made of only one among the many miraculous cures which were wrought. A young mother of a family, who was surrounded by four chil-

dren, saw herself dying from the sting of a serpent, whose poison caused horrible suffering. The close of her agony was looked for with anxiety, when a priest came, and bearing a phial of the precious water of Our Lady of Lourdes, he let one drop fall upon the wound and suddenly, O, miracle! this young mother is restored to health and to her children. (1)

Such are some of the principal sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes in the catholic universe. The foregoing sketch, notwithstanding its imperfections, is sufficient for the purpose which was contemplated. Any further enumeration of sanctuaries would exceed the limits assigned to this work.

(1) For the relation of this miracle see the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes.*

CHAPTER XVII.

CORONATION

OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES BY PIUS IX,

On the 3d of July, 1876.

We have now reached the supreme act of sanction: Pius IX crowns Our Lady of Lourdes. In doing this he confirms the judgment rendered by the Right Reverend Bertrand Sévere Laurence, bishop of Tarbes. The sovereign Pontiff confirms and, as it were, crowns Bernadette's testimony, upon which, God has set His seal, by the testimony of twenty years of miracles.

Next to the triumph of the Œcumenical Council, and the captivity of the Pope, by which it is followed, the coronation of Our Lady of Lourdes is the most important event of this century, and one of the brightest pages in the annals of the church.

On that occasion, Rome has come to Lourdes, where the entire church militant is represented.

Pius IX, in the person of Monsignor Meglia, his legate, and official representative in France, is in the midst of his people at Lourdes. By the instrumentality of his envoy, the supreme head of the church is about to place the diadem upon the brow of the Virgin.

The consecration of the Basilica is to precede the coronation.

Pius IX selected Cardinal Guibert, the archbishop of Paris, to consecrate it in his name, wishing by this choice to give a public token of his esteem and affection to this prince of the church.

Thirty-five archbishops and bishops, of whom seven were from foreign lands; the most Rev. Archbishop Perché of New Orleans, (United States of America;) the Most Rev. Archbishop Dusmet, of Catania, (Sicily;) the Right Rev. Bishop Gross, of Savannah, (United States of America;) the Right Rev. Rodriguès Carvalho, bishop of Saint Paul, (Brazil;) the Right Rev. Bishop Vital of Olinda, (Brazil); the Right Reverend Bishop Vigne, of Oran; the Right Rev. Montes de Oca, bishop of Tamaulipas (Mexico.) Three thousand priests, religious belonging to different orders, and one hundred thousand catholics come together from the old and new worlds.

Such were the witnesses of the coronation of Our Lady of Lourdes by Pius IX.

By an evident ordination of Providence, all was ready, when the day of the Virgin's triumph dawned.

The two statues which were to be crowned, and the two crowns which were to be laid upon their heads had reached Lourdes. The remonstrance which was to be used at the coronation ceremony had also been received in time; it was a marvel of art, worthy of this great occasion.

Mistress of the universe, reigning with sovereign sway over the elements, the Virgin willed that nature

should contribute its share in the festival. The weather was all that could be desired.

During the discourse delivered by the Bishop of Poitiers, intercepting but transparent clouds placed themselves as a screen between the sun and this valley in the Pyrenees, wherein over a hundred thousand catholics were assembled.

In this pilgrimage for the coronation, the Virgin, besides miraculous cures, displayed her power and love by an unparalleled prodigy, saving from a tragic death the seven hundred pilgrims from Niort, as will be seen in the following chapter.

The basilica was ready for the consecration, decked like the spouse for her nuptials with the lamb.

But what use could be expected from the basilica, in presence of those one hundred and twenty thousand faithful who were to assist at the holy sacrifice, and witness the coronation of the Virgin?

A temple, large enough to contain this multitude, had been prepared.

The *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes* tells us that, "God and men had prepared an incomparable temple for the reception of this immense assemblage. The valley of the Gave was its floor, and the sky its dome; the roads and terraces, the hills and mountains formed picturesque galleries. In the centre of this magnificent enclosure, the sacred choir, wherein the holy ceremonies were to be celebrated, was marked out by gigantic poles connected by festoons of floral decorative art. The whole formed a circuit of eight hundred metres, comprising within its limits the Basilica, the Grotto,

and the grand platform which was erected between the Prairie du Savy and the esplanade of the Rosary, opposite the Basilica. This platform was surmounted by a magnificent triumphal arch, eighteen metres in breadth, erected over the main altar and the golden niche in which the spectators were rejoiced at seeing one of the statues, which was to be crowned. The platform, the Basilica, and the tall flag staffs were decorated with long streamers of white and blue, and white and yellow bunting, on which the names of the Immaculate Conception and of Pius IX were blended, forming a joyous harmony, which filled the air.

"In that vast choir, forty-five priests were enabled to celebrate the holy sacrifice of mass, at the same time, and to give communion to thousands of the faithful. The streamers served also to point out the course of the triumphal avenue, though which the bishops were to pass, in solemn procession, during three days, and where for three nights immense torchlight processions would move."

The bishop of Poitiers delivered his immortal homily from this platform, and from it also, Fathers Roux, Candeloup and Hubin, of the Society of Jesus spoke, as only apostles could speak, after the bishop had expressed himself as a father of the church.

EVE OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE BASILICA.

Saturday July 1st, 1876.

The solemnity began, as we learn from the *Annals* on Saturday, July 1st, at about five o'clock in the afternoon.

The great procession of bishops advanced in magnificent order, from the episcopal residence towards the Basilica, traversing the sea of pilgrims who were already upon the ground. Twelve young Arabs of very modest demeanor, who were clad in their beautiful white national costume, attracted great attention, as they appeared at the right of the pageant.

The consecrating cardinal was received at the gates of the crypt, by bishop Jourdan of Tarbes, who expressed himself as follows:

"Eminence, the bishop, the clergy, and the faithful of the diocese of Tarbes are happy to receive and greet, in your person, the delegate and worthy representative of the august Pius IX. May the blessings which your Eminence conveys to us from this high authority united with those of his excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio, and the most reverend archbishops, and right reverend bishops here present, touch the heart of Mary immaculate, and obtain for us the triumph of our holy mother, the church, and the salvation of France'

The cardinal returned thanks to the bishop in a few

words remarkable for their noble simplicity, and alluded to the importance of the ceremony, which was about to begin.

Then the procession entered the chapel of the crypt.

The briefs and pontifical decrees relative to the sacred office were read, and all of the sixteen consecrating bishops affixed their seals to the cases of relics, one of which was to be deposited in each altar.

The delicate attention paid Archbishop Desprez, of Toulouse, conferring upon him the honor of consecrating the altar of Saint Germaine-Cousin, was particularly noticeable.

The cardinal, by virtue of the extraordinary permission granted him by the Holy Father, blessed in advance, the water to be used in sprinkling, the gregorian water, the cement, the incense, and the wax which would be required on the following day, for the consecration.

The holy relics were deposited in the chapel of the Sacred Heart, in the crypt, where they were venerated by the faithful, during the entire night.

The following recital is to be found in the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*, which from this moment until the close of the present chapter, are reproduced textually. And indeed, who are better qualified to relate this solemnity than the worthy and pious editors of these *Annals*, since besides enjoying the happiness of being the Virgin's chaplains, they are, at the same time, eye witnesses of the events chronicled in the pages of their periodical?

At night, an immense crowd assembled at the Grotto, and sang until a late hour, the joyous strains of the *Ave Maria*, and the touching invocations of the litany of Loretto. Rev. Father Candeloup, one of the members of the Society of Jesus, who is so profoundly devoted to Our Lady of Lourdes, and who, with the utmost cordiality, lends such generous assistance to the missionaries, explained the great solemnity which had just begun, and of which, the dedication of Solomon's temple was only a figure. Father Candeloup, using the language of the royal prophet said: "O Lord, remember David." (1)

And it behooves us also, on the occasion of this festival, to remember David, the great Bishop of Tarbes, who prepared the materials for this temple of the mother of God, and who, happier than David, witnessed its erection, and beheld the multitudes already eager to cross its sacred threshold. He has completed this shrine, which has been embellished by the care of his three successors, who are present at its consecration. Let us also be not unmindful of our David and our Solomon, Pius IX, who consecrates this temple, by the ministry of his delegate, and who, has himself, condescended to regulate the order to be observed in the ceremonies. Let us also remember her, who asked for this chapel, who built it, and who, to-morrow, will see it glorified by an unheard of splendor. Let us also think of Jesus Christ, who is about to inhabit the temple prepared by His mother; let us prepare our hearts, in order that by a worthy communion

(1) Ps, c. xxxi.

which also to-morrow, we will make, He may abide therein."

On all sides arose the spontaneous shout: "Long live the immaculate Virgin! Long live Pius IX!" When the chanting of sacred music came to an end, silent prayer, at the Grotto, resumed its mysterious and solemn sway, and ceased neither day nor night, during all these joyful days.

Sweet and tranquil night! The moon, a figure of the immaculate Virgin, shed its softest light upon the mountains. At midnight masses began at the Grotto, at the crypt, on the terrace of the church, on the esplanade, and at the residences of the bishops.

On all the mountain paths, and on the railroads, through which avenues of communication, pilgrims were pouring in by thousands, and prayer was unceasingly offered up; here in loud canticles—there in the indistinct murmur heard in the distance. The arrival of the pilgrims was attended by prodigies. An account of the marvelous protection, which preserved from a most terrible disaster the train, conveying pilgrims from Niort, will be read with emotion—the Virgin was keeping guard over her children.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE BASILICA

AND THE DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

BISHOP MERMILLOD,

July 2nd, 1876.

Beneath an unclouded sky, at seven o'clock in the morning, the great procession began its march towards the Basilica, in the following order:

The cross preceding the lengthy files of priests clad in surplices;

Canons, from other localities, in their choir robes;

Four Priests wearing red chasubles, and bearing the litter upon which the Relics were placed;

The Canons, from Tarbes, in sacred vestments;

The Dignitaries wearing copes;

The Archbishops and Bishops, consecrators of the altars, with croziers and mitres, each supported by two assistants in choir robes, and attended by clerics carrying their insignia of office;

Two pontifical mace bearers;

His Eminence, the Cardinal, with his ministers robed in white dalmatics, followed by a train bearer clad in a surplice, and three Chaplains dressed in black, and wearing cloaks;

Four Clergymen wearing copes and carrying the insignia of office;

The remaining archbishops and bishops, arrayed

with copes, croziers and mitres, each one supported by two assistants;

Prelates who acted as apostolic prothonotaries, and secret and honorary chamberlains;

Chamberlains "*de capa e de spada*," and the Dignitaries of the Pontifical Orders.

The whole giving an idea of the Papal Court, in its religious splendor: the crowd, impressed by the pomp of this unusual scene, bowed reverentially on bended knees.

The ceremonies of the consecration were performed with unheard of magnificence. There were moments, whose grandeur can not be expressed; as, for instance, when the five Pontiffs, who were consecrating the church, made the lustral sprinklings of holy water without and within the temple; and when, standing upon lofty platforms, they were seen signing the walls of the Basilica with the holy unction.

The entire throng were filled with emotion at the moment when the sixteen bishops, the consecrators of the altars, forming a majestic circle in the choir, presented to the veneration of the faithful the relics of the saints, which they were about to deposit in the tombs formed by the altars. Never before had it occurred that sixteen bishops, on a similar occasion, consecrated the altars of a church. This unique glory was reserved for the chapel built at the request of the immaculate Virgin.

When the bride's attire was completed, the divine Bridegroom, the Eucharistic God made His solemn entry, during the splendid ceremonies of the pontifical

mass celebrated by the Metropolitan Archbishop, and accompanied by chants and harmonies, whose grandeur and majesty consisted in their simplicity.

After the Gospel, Bishop Mermillod appeared in the pulpit, where he was greeted by the love borne him by all hearts. It is indeed due to the exiled and proscribed bishop, to the indefatigable apostle, in whom, in our time, are so admirably personified the trials of the church militant, it belongs to him of right, that his should be the voice to be uplifted on this day of triumph. The following text was chosen by the bishop:

"In that day shall this canticle be sung in the land of Judea.

"Zion the city of our strength, a Saviour, a wall and a bulwark shall be set therein.

"Open ye the gates, and let the just nation, that keepeth the truth, enter in.

"The old error is passed away: thou wilt keep peace: peace, because we have hoped in thee." (1)

"How magnificent are the contrasts by which our gaze is enraptured at this place! At the foot of these mountains, a few years ago, in a lonely spot, a poor shepherdess was kneeling between the rock and the torrent....To-day, at this same spot, crowds of every nationality, princes of the church, and the delegates of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, meet in serried ranks. A Basilica, which is a marvel of christian art, has sprung up out of the ground, and serves as a crown placed upon the brow of the miraculous Grotto; and

(1) Isaias, xxvi, 1, 2, 3.

the Vicar of Jesus Christ glorifies that Basilica by causing it to be consecrated in His name.

"In vain do incredulity and heresy endeavor to profane the apparitions of the Grotto; in vain do they accuse the church of abandoning sublime doctrine, for puerile devotions. No, the church abandons nothing; and here, there is nothing childish. The fact which took place at Lourdes is the affirmation: First, of christianity integral in its doctrine; Second, of christianity social in its influence. Our Lady of Lourdes puts her foot down upon that twofold cotemporary error, whose aim is either to lessen christianity by despoiling it of every thing supernatural, or to relegate it to the sanctuary of conscience and prevent its action in the social order. The fact which took place at Lourdes, whose truth is so strikingly attested by prodigies and pilgrimages is, at once, the demonstration of that supernatural element, which lives in the church, and the testimony rendered in favor of Jesus Christ in His historical reality, His humanity and His divinity. 'I am a mother,' says the Virgin, 'therefore I have a son who is man; I am immaculate, therefore my Son is God.'

"This Basilica is the city, whose gates open to 'let the just nation that keepeth the truth enter in.' This Basilica affirms the immaculate Virgin; and the immaculate Virgin is the mother, the guardian, and the apostle of the Word made flesh, the light of souls and nations.

"Incredulity has desired to expel God from the social order, especially in France. From this time on,

the France of Jesus Christ seems to have lost her soul, her life. The cradle of France rests upon a supernatural foundation; an apparition upon a battle field—where a shepherdess was found, proclaiming that Christ and His mother chose, as their own, a people predestined for great deeds.

"France is sustained by the supernatural order only: witness Joan of Arc. The same supernatural order makes its re-appearance, in our time, in the resurrection of France. On the one hand, we see the Northern portion of the country bowing down before the poor pilgrim Labre, and before the modest shepherdess of Nanterre; on the other hand, we see the population greeting the shepherdess of Pibrac, and we see crowds hastening from all parts of France, led by a shepherdess to the foot of the Pyrenees, affirming anew that the supernatural order—that Christ, in the integral conception which is entertained of Him, is the soul of France. Does it not seem as though God demonstrates, in this manner, that He is pleased to send the humble and the poor, as messengers to His chosen people, in order to inoculate the popular ideas with the holy nobility of christianity.

"Christianity and France are alike wounded. The latter, however, is undergoing reform, thanks to the inspirations of Pius IX, and to the influence of these pilgrimages, in which all 'tribes.... and tongues' (1) meet in community of prayer and hope.

"The Basilica of Lourdes is a monument erected to prove that the world will be saved by the supernatural

(1) Apocalypse, vii., 9.

element of the Gospel, penetrating intellects by its doctrines; and by its action, all the living energies of our modern societies.

"More than ever, notwithstanding suffering and shadows, we are approaching the realization of the desire of Our Lord: namely, that souls may be united in truth and love, that the nations of the universe may form only one fold, under one shepherd; and that the basilica of christian civilization may rise from its ruins, for the glory of God and the peace of the world.

"Such are the hopes which this incomparable festival excites. Such is the cry of faith and love which is uttered by the heart of Pius IX, as well as by that of the peoples of the earth, at the present time, when Europe falling by piece-meal, looks, with anxious eyes, upon the struggles going on in the East. Our Lady of Lourdes is therefore our rainbow—she is the aurora announcing the sun of justice which is to rise at the close of this century!"

The foregoing incomplete analysis conveys merely a feeble idea of this magnificent discourse—full of light and fire—which produced the deepest impression upon the select audience present.

Whilst these wonderful things were taking place, and this noble language was spoken within the Basilica, the crowd which was gathered around the grand platform were listening to Reverend Father Candeloup, who, alluding to the history of Esther, was pointing out the grandeurs of Our Lady of Lourdes, whom the vicar of Christ was to crown upon the following day.

The word of God was occasionally interrupted, either by beautiful chants, or by the harmonies executed by the excellent military band of the artillery school at Tarbes, which General de Franchessin had cheerfully sent to take part in the grand celebration, and at which, himself, several of his officers, and a large number of soldiers assisted. The army of France, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, will always be the army of Jesus Christ.

A high mass was then sung in presence of reverential and attentive multitudes.

The hours were gliding by however, and the assembly were exposed to the rays of a burning Southern sun. The singing was resumed, and the worthy soldiers of the band, although they might be said to be fasting, still did not weary in repeating the sweet and religious notes of their admirable harmonies; now joyous and inspiring; now tender and religious.

Finally, after six hours of expectation, the lengthy and magnificent pageant formed by the bishops and the clergy was seen slowly wending its way from the Basilica to the platform, where the prelates, with the majesty of their rank, surrounded the delegate of the Holy Father, who, in his name, was about to give the papal benediction. It was a solemn moment the valley and the hills, literally swarming with the faithful, recalled splendidly to mind the square of Saint Peter's at Rome; the radiant portrait of Pius IX, at the Basilica, seemed to embrace, at one single loving glance, the multitude gathered together from all parts of the earth; and His representative, in raising his

hand to bless, did, in reality, cause the blessing of heaven to descend upon the city and the world, *Urbi et Orbi.*

THE EVENING OF SUNDAY.

Love is indefatigable. At five o'clock, the bishops resumed the ceremony, which had been suspended, only a short time before. Exposed to the sun's rays, they again went in procession to the platform, where the throng, even more densely packed than in the morning, were waiting. Reverend Father Roux made vital thrusts at the assembled masses, with the weapon furnished by his vigorous, lucid and burning discourse. He furnished an eloquent explanation of the solemnity which had occasioned this gathering:

1st. This festival places before our minds the admirable ways of the Lord, who confounds the prudence of the wise, by revealing Himself to the feeble, to those who resemble the humble sheperdess of the Pyrenees.

2d. This feast is the expression of the two-fold belief, which has thrilled the true believers in this century, namely, faith in the two dogmas proclaimed in our day: the Immaculate Conception of the mother of God, and the infallibility of the Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

3d. This feast strengthens our hopes: it promises and shows us the awakening of faith through the pilgrimages, the reformation of morals by means of pen-

ance, the conversion of sinners, whom the Virgin recommended to the child's prayers as well as our own; it is also the token of the religious resurrection of France and the triumph of the church.

After a triumphal *Magnificat* chanted by the entire assembly of the faithful, the Eucharistic God, reposing amidst the splendors of the monstrance of the Immaculate Conception, blessed the multitude, the valley, the vastness of space and of heaven.

At sunset, another festival began, or rather the same festival was continued, under a more tender and brilliant form.

Reverend Father Roux enkindled additional enthusiasm among the countless thousands of pilgrims; already for some time past, the grounds in the neighborhood of the Grotto had been insufficient to accommodate them all, even with standing room.

Love for Mary Immaculate and love for the Vicar of Christ found vent from the heart of this Reverend Father, through a hymn, which was taken up and echoed by the hearts of that immense audience—by the mountains and by heaven. The sacred chants were resumed, and their power, comparable only to that of the billows of the ocean, continued to be felt until a new day dawned upon the valley.

The Basilica was illuminated and it was a representation of what the heavenly Jerusalem may be conceived to be by weak human intellect. Lines of fire marked out admirably all the architectural beauties of the front of the church. Soon the illumination, like an electric current, caused the entire valley to scintillate

The convent of the Benedictine Nuns displayed its glowing monstrance; a bright star was shining in front of the Carmelite convent. Every edifice, and every house were speedily one blaze of continuous light, which reached unto the farthest street of the religious city of Lourdes.

At the same time, fifty thousand pilgrims lighted their torches and began that series of processions to which has been attached the qualification of indefinite. "This river of stars" started from the Grotto, ascended the mountains, encircling the Basilica, as with a crown of love, and streamed down majestically towards the esplanade, where it spread its immense undulations like the waters of the sea; then, resuming its onward course and proceeding either over ground already traversed, or flowing towards the city of Lourdes, it was met, every where along its route, by other and similar luminous currents, into which it apparently merged, with the ebbing and flowing of the tide of pilgrims.

At the same time, an ocean of human voices, sounding the joyous language of the *Ave Maria*, or the supplications of litanies and popular sacred canticles, begged for mercy upon France devoted to Jesus Christ.

All of a sudden, an explosion was heard upon the mountain; serpents of fire ascended skyward like flashes of lightning; immense rockets, bowing gracefully over the Basilica, flooded it with thousands of stars resplendent with all the hues of the rainbow. Heaven itself seemed as though expending all its splendors upon the consecrated chapel.

Shortly afterwards, the Basilica appeared to be on fire. Powerful foci of Bengal lights cast upon it, successively, shades and tints of every hue, from the most brilliant to the most subdued, and in the midst of this ever changing variety, the illuminated outlines of the sacred edifice shone forth, as it were, with the sparkling effects of precious diamonds.

It was the feast of the Basilica; it is also the feast of the immaculate Virgin. The summit of the mountain is illuminated, and upon this new Tabor, shining from afar, through the clear atmosphere are to be read the radiant words:

LONG LIVE OUR LADY OF LOURDES!

Blue and white globes rising from either side and meeting above, formed a magnificent triumphal arch over Our Lady of Lourdes.

When this enchanting spectacle had been sufficiently admired and applauded, the mountain burst forth like a volcano, and threw aloft a splendid closing bouquet, whose scintillations, stars, globes and thunder, were a fitting summary of the glories of this incomparable day.

THE CORONATION.

Oration delivered by Bishop Pie of Poitiers.

The splendors of this night, together with the processions, the prayers and the chants of a hundred thousand pilgrims, had lasted until day-break. It was indeed remarkable, that even the magnificent pyrotechnic display had not interrupted the processions, nor had the singing of sacred canticles been able to restrain the vehemence of prayer. The forty-five simultaneous masses had been begun at midnight; communion was given, at the same time, in several different places.

At nine o'clock, this immense multitude of people filled to overflowing the valley of the Gave, covered the neighboring heights, and hung in clusters from the rocky peaks and crags. The sky was veiled with clouds, and the temperature was "exquisite."

The pontifical high mass, celebrated by the Nuncio in presence of the Cardinal and the Bishops, and in view of the densely packed assembly of faithful, was chanted with admirable precision and power by thousands of voices, supported by the splendid instrumental music executed by the band from Lourdes.

During the five hours, which this ceremony lasted, the countless throng remained silent, recollected, attentive, and deeply impressed. An interior voice had addressed itself to the hearts of those whom distance

had prevented from hearing a masterpiece of human eloquence.

After the Gospel, the Bishop of Poitiers mounted the pulpit; a profound and impressive silence hovered over the audience and the valley, and extended to the sheltering canopy of heaven.

In his exordium, the bishop alluded to the "grandeur of this spectacle, to the immense clamor, the sublime dialogue heard at this spot, the Gave turning backward like *Jordan*, the little hills and the mountains skipping like the lambs of the flock and like rams, the whole earth moved at the presence of the Lord, (1) who shone forth through the features of the immaculate Virgin, the rock turned into a pool of water, the growth of sacred edifices and religious houses, the budding forth of those altars and oratories which make Lourdes a city unparalleled in the universe, these prelates surrounded by one hundred thousand of the faithful, and Pius IX on the point of crowning Our Lady of Lourdes by the hands of his representative. The oration in its development also appeared now to rush along with the impetuous fury of the torrent; then, to start with the mountains, and, again, to skip with the little hills and the lambs....."

Every heart, within hearing, was bounding also, and the audience were unable to refrain from manifesting their applause, which the bishop hastened to check. Then, the orator changing from the lyric style of poetry, spoke the calm, lucid, and powerful language of catholic doctrine. He expounded the theory of divine

(1) Ps. cxiii.

revelations, which he applied to the history of Our Lady of Lourdes; and furnished its theological and rational demonstration with clearness, logic and force, as irresistible as truth.

There remains nothing further to be said with regard to this great history: day has dawned; negation is possible no longer; Hilary, the oracle of Gaul, has spoken. This oration, a monument of Christian and French literature, is the richest crown which has been deposited upon the brow of the Virgin of the Grotto.

The moment so eagerly looked forward to had come at last. When the pontifical mass was brought to a close, the crown was placed in the midst of the assembled bishops. The apostolic Nuncio, delegated by the Holy Father, in the name of his Holiness, blessed this new diadem, which was about to deck the brow of the immaculate Virgin. Then he ascended slowly the long flight of stairs which led to the gold niche, whence, above the altar, benignantly smiled a sweet and piously carved statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Pontiff, filled with emotion, drew near and deposited the blessed crown upon the brow of the queen of heaven.

After a moment spent in silence, which beggars description, the hearts of the assembly found vent, first in tears, then in shouts of joy and applause, and finally in hymns of triumph: *Regina cœli, lætare, alleluia*..... The tears and shouts of applause were renewed, and more than once overwhelmed the sounds produced by the sacred chants and the music of the bands, whilst bishop after bishop in succession came to offer incense on bended knees to the crowned queen.

All is over.... Is there anything still wanting to the glory of Our Lady of Lourdes?

Here, prostrate at thy feet, O immaculate Virgin, is the representative of Pius IX, who, on the 8th of December, 1854, in the Vatican Basilica, proclaimed thee Immaculate; and who, on this memorable day, July 3d, 1876, again crowns thee, who art the "Immaculate Conception" of the Grotto. Behold the princes of the church, the bishops, the priests, the faithful of the world, who greet thee, with their voices, their tears, their confidence and their love. Listen, O mother, to the prayers which they have been addressing thee for the past eighteen years, which they still address thee, at this time, on behalf of sinners, whom thou lovest; and contemplate thy chapel, which is resplendent with the singular glory of its consecration. Hearken to the grateful accents of those who have drunk thy saving water. O mother, thou art crowned by the love of thy children, thou art crowned by thy works. Reign, now, O Immaculate Conception! Reign by love, in completing thy work of salvation; and let all who have crowned thee, the church, Pius IX, France, and all thy children; let all reign with thee!

The papal benediction was given by the apostolic Nuncio with all the pomp observed on the previous day.

The Bishop of Tarbes, with all the effusion of which a lively sense of gratitude is susceptible, thanked Pius IX, the Cardinal, the Nuncio, the Archbishops and Bishops, the illustrious orator, the priests and the faithful—all, whose favors, presence, discourses, faith

and piety had tendered such great glory to Our Lady of Lourdes and to his diocese. His address, delivered in powerful tones, was wafted even unto the crowds upon the hills, and its effect was increased by the assent given by the great throng of christians who united with the bishop in thanking those to whom this assembly was indebted for the privilege of witnessing spectacles not of this world.

The great procession resumed its triumphal march, for the *eighth* time. Now, the bishops were compelled, in self defense, to struggle against the testimonials of love showered upon them by the priests and the faithful, who rushed forward to kiss their rings, their hands and their vestments. These smiling prelates wore upon their countenances a reflection, as it were, of the halo which encircled the brow of the immaculate Virgin.

The second crown, blessed by the Nuncio, was borne on the shoulders of the priests, on a stand, which was itself surmounted by a magnificent wreath of golden flowers; it was offered by the glorious pageant to the Madonna of the Grotto, and solemnly carried by the bishops into the Basilica, which was resplendent with the lights of thousands of tapers. It was placed on the brow of the statue which is over the main altar, where resides the divine Son, who eternally crowns His mother amidst the splendors of heaven.

The crowds escorted the bishops back to the episcopal residence, where all the prelates collectively bestowed a final blessing.

And still, all was not yet at an end. That evening, in presence of several bishops, the grand octave was

begun, upon the same platform, the sermon being preached by a real apostle, Reverend Father Hubin, of the Society of Jesus.

On Monday night, the multitudes repeated their gigantic processions around the Basilica, which was again illuminated, and around the platform, where they lovingly besieged the Virgin with the new crown on her head.

The next morning, a woman from Poitiers was miraculously cured, during the mass which was celebrated at the Grotto by the apostolic Nuncio. It was, as though divine goodness designed to display its sovereign dominion, at the close, as well as at the opening of these ceremonies.

All was not over—on the contrary, it would seem, that a new era was about to open for Our Lady of Lourdes, who became better known and better loved, whose influence as queen and mother sunk more deeply than ever into christian hearts.

And besides, what comes from heaven knows no ending; thus, love, which has produced these magnificent festivities, will be forever crowned and consecrated in the glorious *Basilica* of the eternal Love.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The great miracle wrought by the most Blessed Virgin in behalf of the seven hundred Pilgrims traveling by rail from Niort to Lourdes.—Monstrance prepared for the ceremony of the Coronation.

At the moment when the entire church and the whole universe were, by the hands of Pius IX, about to crown the immaculate Virgin, proclaiming, through this crown placed on her head, her absolute dominion over the world, it pleases this August Virgin to show, in presence of heaven and earth, that every thing in nature recognizes her voice and obeys her sovereign will.

It is necessary, that all peoples, that future ages, and that the most remote posterity shall be made acquainted with the great miracle wrought by Our Lady of Lourdes, on the occasion of the festival of her coronation. This was a public miracle, one falling readily under the senses, and its reality is attested by seven hundred witnesses, in whose behalf the Virgin performs the prodigy. No such wonderful event has ever occurred since railroads and steam were known. No man living, if he desire to use his reasoning faculties, can deny that here is a miracle. If however, the power of the queen of heaven and earth is displayed in this prodigy, the maternal tenderness of the immaculate

Virgin towards mankind shines forth with even still greater brilliancy. The miraculous cures granted to some few sick persons by means of the water of the Grotto, did not suffice for her love. On the rail, she saves from destruction a legion of seven hundred pilgrims coming from Niort; which means, seven hundred families from whom mourning is averted!

Let us relate this scene. During the night, between Morcenx and Ygos, the train conveying seven hundred passengers from Niort, is met by the express coming from Mont-de-Marsan, and is rushing forward at the rate of sixty kilomètres an hour. Who does not see what the effect of such a collision must be? The immaculate Virgin is however present: she issues her sovereign commands to steam and to death, which obey her, and respect those over whom she watches. The engineer, the fireman, and the pilgrims, all escape uninjured by this fearful shock. It is with difficulty they realize the fact that they are still alive!

The miracle is patent to all; a cry of gratitude and thanksgiving is uttered by all hearts: "O immaculate Virgin, it is thy motherly and all-powerful hand which has saved us! Mayest thou be forever blessed!"

The railway officials unite with the pilgrims in admitting the miraculous occurrence.

"Sometime afterwards," as we learn from the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*, "the director of trains, on the Southern railway lines, came to Ygos, and whilst exchanging congratulations, he affirmed that a miracle alone could have saved the pilgrims."

To this important testimony should be added that of another equally competent person. It was on the return from Lourdes; at one of the principal stations, the director of the pilgrimage train was met by the station master, who said: "I congratulate you on having escaped from so great a danger. Since the employment of steam-power, there is no fact of the kind on record, and the same result, under similar circumstances, is not possible through human agencies. You ought to have been ground to pieces! Ah! you speak a great deal concerning the miracles which are wrought at Lourdes.....Well, believe me, there has never been a a miracle equal to this one; and your escape the other night is, in my opinion, the best established miracle of all."

Thus, the most Blessed Virgin has wished that the souvenir of this, the greatest miracle of all, should be connected with that most imposing of all the tributes of honor she was to receive at Lourdes—namely, her coronation by Pius IX.

She also intended to show, by this event, that there is no danger from which she cannot save us; that she protects those who place themselves under her holy protection, and that she is ever all-powerful to succor them!

Finally, by this miracle, her maternal tenderness has disclosed the secret of attaching to herself, by imperishable bonds of servitude, the seven hundred pilgrims whom she has rescued from death.

What an undying souvenir for those pilgrims! How

great their gratitude towards so tender a mother!—How earnest will be their endeavors to promote her reign over their families!

In this coronation of the immaculate Virgin it was necessary that every detail should be organized on a scale of grandeur, which might convey to us, in this our exile, an idea of our heavenly home.

That Basilica, in the open air, whose dome was the sky, represents to us the Basilica of the city of God. That eucharistic feast, for which one hundred thousand hosts had been prepared, and at which that number of guests participated, was a magnificent figure of the banquet to which God invites his saints and angels for all eternity.

At the same time that Jesus Christ caused a brilliant crown of diamonds to be placed upon the brow of His mother, by the hands of Pius IX, He Himself wished to appear upon an eucharistic throne sparkling with precious stones, and formed of the most costly materials which art had been able to collect; we allude to the monstrance prepared for the ceremony of the coronation.

To Lyons, the cradle of the work of the propagation of the faith, belongs the glory of having given to the church, to France and to christian art the creator of this master-piece, upon which the name of Mr. Armand Calliat is engraven forever. The donors, including the principal giver, have desired to remain unknown; a praiseworthy sentiment. "Too miserly is that heart for which God does not suffice," said an illustrious lady

of Paris, who, in her lifetime, was known under the name of Miss Acarie; and who is, to-day, venerated upon our altars under the title of blessed Mary of the Incarnation.

Precious stones had been presented to the most Blessed Virgin by several eminent christian women. Reverend Father Sempé, the very worthy superior of the missionaries, conceived the happy thought of having them mounted in a magnificent monstrance.—Through faith, we may foresee the future reward of these precious gifts. These gems, offered in time to Jesus Christ and to His most holy mother, will shine forth on the day of the final judgment, and afterwards in heaven, amidst the crowns of the happy women who gave them, just as the gold for the monstrance will form part of the crown to be awarded to the generous men by whom it was presented as a gift. In this case, however, the principal giver is the artist who conceived the plan for the monstrance, which, when executed by him, proved to be a master-piece of art. Others have offered gold and precious stones; but he has contributed mental labor, prolonged for several years. In return, it must be said that his efforts have been crowned with success. This master-piece will be considered one of the purest and most magnificent glories of christian art in the nineteenth century. If the gold and the diamonds be destined to shine one day in the crowns prepared for those by whom they were given, will not the Saviour of the world, the king

of kings, reserve a post of honor in His kingdom for the christian artist who, in presence of the universe, has constructed for Him so glorious a throne? Therefore, let Mr. Armand Calliat consider, as being addressed to himself, as well as to all those who labor in the field of christian art, this language of Saint Peter to the first disciples of the Gospel: "To you therefore, that believe, he is honor — *Vobis igitur honor credentibus!*" (1)

Mr. Augustus Roussel, one of the historians of the feast of the coronation, gives the following description of the sublime conception realized by Mr. Armand Calliat:

"This monstrance, a wonderful specimen of cunning due to the goldsmith's art, is a master-piece whose description it is almost futile to attempt. It is necessary to examine it as a whole, and in all its parts, from the pedestal to the cross which surmounts the halo, radiating from a marvelous stem. Statuary plays so important a part in this production, that it is comparable to no other work of its kind. There are to be counted no less than sixty-three modeled figures in alto and basso relievo, four monsters, four eagles and sixteen doves, without mentioning either the statues of the Blessed Virgin and of Saint Joseph which are set back to back beneath the halo, or the thirty-two medallions surrounding the face and the reverse of the lens destined to receive the blessed sacrament. The me-

(1) I. Ep. St. Peter ii. 7.

dallions are crowded with engraved and enamelled figures of nearly one hundred personages.

"The thought of giving any idea of the richness of this master-piece of art must either be abandoned, or be productive simply of an array of figures. The reader must know therefore, that in the entire monstrance, there are more than one thousand diamonds of all sizes, from the sparks of dust termed brilliants to the superb stones flashing with prismatic hues, thousands of times irradiated; without mentioning either the fourteen hundred other precious stones, rose-topazes, rubies, amethysts, oriental pearls, which pay their tribute to the immaculate Virgin; or the twenty-two stars set in brilliants which encircle the halo, or the twelve stars, also set in smaller brilliants, forming the glory around the Virgin, or the thirty-two sparkling lilies of the accompanying crown of the rosary; finally, on the monstrance is also to be seen the statue of the Blessed Virgin, standing out in relief from the Grotto, by which it is, as it were, framed, and resting upon a back ground of pale rose colored, soft tinted topazes. In a word, it is a marvel of enamelling, of gilding and of goldsmithing; and one is not astonished at learning that Mr. Armand Calliat, of Lyons, spent four years of his life upon this unparalleled work of art, to whose execution he devoted the labor of thirty-six of his most skilled workmen. How great are the prodigies wrought by love, however, and it is the love which pilgrims bear Our Lady of Lourdes, which has gathered to-

gether all these rare treasures! It is the same love which inspired the generous giver, without whose assistance it would have been impossible to employ all these gifts in one single piece of workmanship; it may be said that it is this love also, which furnished the artist with his ideal, and there can be no doubt that this love will also burst forth with undiminished energy in the admiration expressed by the pilgrims, when beneath the sun's rays they will contemplate the glittering splendor of this other sun, which constitutes an inappreciable homage to the mother of all purity."

CHAPTER XIX.

HOMILY

By the Right Reverend Louis Edward Pie,

Bishop of Poitiers.

In order that every thing in the solemnity of the coronation should be worthy of the queen of heaven, it was necessary that after the unavoidably temporary splendor of the festival, a monument should be erected which would perpetuate its memories and narrate its history from century to century.

It has pleased the Sovereign Lord of heaven and of earth that such a monument be reared. That monument is the Homily of Bishop Pie of Poitiers, which will now be placed before the reader, preceded by the congratulatory brief addressed to him by Pius IX.

BRIEF OF THE HOLY FATHER

To the Right Reverend Bishop of Poitiers.

To our venerable Brother, Louis Edward,
Bishop of Poitiers.

PIUS IX, POPE.

Venerable Brother—Greeting and apostolic benediction. For that moral evil of our epoch, which makes man, elevated to the honor of divine adoption, degrade himself to the level of the brute creation, to which he becomes similar, there is no remedy more efficacious; and for such naturalism, no more powerful refutation can be opposed, than these manifest, indubitable, multiplied facts, which, placed within reach of all, throw every one into a state of astonishment: facts, whose characteristics are evidently above the ordinary forces of nature, and which, for that very reason, lifting the mind above its low regions, elevate it to the heights of the supernatural order.

We congratulate you, venerable Brother, for having made this your starting point, and not only for having spoken with the knowledge, the gravity, and the perspicuity which constitute the customary merit of your style; but also for having produced a work eminently fitting and appearing in a proper time. Although this

discourse, pronounced by you during the solemn festivities at Lourdes, seemed to relate entirely to the coronation of the statue of the immaculate Virgin, still you therein again displayed that marvelous skill which is peculiar to yourself; for, whilst endeavoring not to lose sight of your subject, and also whilst treating it with great doctrinal soundness and eloquence; you have, at the same time, happily discovered the secret of alluding to the circumstances of the times, and of furnishing useful and necessary teachings to the great throngs which pressed forward to listen to you; using, besides, so natural a link in connecting these great lessons with your theme, that they seemed, as it were, its necessary development and embellishment.

Such teachings sink deeply into souls, and repeated by the thousand tongues of publicity, they will not only have been profitable to your audience, but their effect will be produced upon innumerable minds. As to ourselves, who have read your beautiful homily with the greatest of pleasure, we desire this spiritual fruit for you. And, in token of heavenly favor, besides being, at the same time, a sign of our special affection for you, we grant, with all our heart, the apostolic benediction to yourself, venerable Brother, and to your entire diocese.

Given at Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the 27th day of July, of the year 1876, the 31st of our pontificate.

PIUS IX, POPE.

HOMILY PRONOUNCED AT LOURDES

By the Right Reverend Louis Edward Pie, Bishop of Poitiers,

On the 3d of July, 1876.

"*Et erit in novissimis diebus, dicit Dominus: Effundam de Spiritu meo super omnem carnem, et prophetabunt filii vestri et filiæ vestræ, et juvenes vestri visiones videbunt.*"

"And it shall come to pass, in the last days, (saith the Lord) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions." [Acts II, 17.]

My Lord: (1)

I. In presence of such multitudes and of scenes like these, human language is powerless. How could I expect my feeble voice to be heard under circumstances in which the most powerful and sonorous vocal organ would admit its insufficiency? Besides, do you not hear an immense clamor arising from all our surroundings, a dialogue, in which question mingles with answer? For my part, nearly twelve years have elapsed since I last visited this spot; by what mysterious power has it been thus transformed? "What

[1] His Excelleney, the Right Reverend Apostolic Nuncio, who had been delegated by the Holy Father for the coronation of Our Lady of Lourdes.

ailed thee, O thou Gave, that thou didst flee and that thou wast turned back? Ye mountains, what transport caused ye to skip like the rams that clamber over your summits; and ye hills, to bound like the lambs that graze upon your slopes?" And the entire space bounded by this vast horizon to cry out: This land, this country, has been upheaved and thoroughly moved at the presence of the Lord: *A facie Domini mota est terra.* For it was indeed the Godhead whose rays were emitted through the features of the spotless Virgin. What do I say? The entire globe has experienced the effects of this commotion, since the moment, when, by virtue of the order from on high, stone was here hollowed out to form a basin and a reservoir, and the rock was turned into an inexhaustible pool of water: *A facie Dei..qui convertit petram in stagna aquarum, et rupem in fontes aquarum.* (1) Thence started the impulse which has been communicated to the world in both hemispheres. Therein lies the root of this entire vegetation of sacred edifices and religious houses, of all this germination of altars and sanctuaries, which to-day make Lourdes a city without parallel, a spot unique in the universe.

And when the church, always so slow and so reserved, in dealing with prodigies, which depart from the order of nature; when the episcopate, following the example of its highest dignitaries; in fine, when, beneath the gaze and with the applause of nearly one hundred thousand of the faithful, the supreme Pontiff, at the hands of his representative to the French na-

(1) Ps. cxiii, 5–8.

tion, is about to crown the image of the Virgin, who appeared in this Grotto, language is really out of place. Or, at least, should it also leap with the mountains and the rams, and skip with the hills and the lambs. Behold, on the contrary however, here I am prohibited from thus bounding and leaping. Snatching myself away from the ardor of enthusiasm, I venture to intreat you to bear, for some moments, with the calm and discreet language of doctrinal exposition. Others have already intonated the lyric hymn, and this most legitimate chant will be resumed and continued; for the present, resign yourselves to listen to austere and didactic language. Wherever Christ's infallible Vicar intervenes, even indirectly and entirely outside of his supremacy as teacher, everything must be expressed in the most concise terms. This is necessary, even for the enlightenment of the minds of those who believe, subject, as they are, to go astray amidst erroneous suppositions; it is necessary, too, to close the hostile lips of those whom the apostle Saint Peter, notwithstanding the usual moderation of his style, calls "irrational beasts....blaspheming those things which they know not: *Velut irrationabilia pecora....*, *in his quæ ignorant blasphemantes.*" (1) And as all sound theology has its foundations resting upon the revealed Word, so will light dawn upon us through the text, which we quoted at first, and whose development will be the object of this homily.

(1) II. Peter, ii, 12.

II. "And it shall come to pass, in the last days (saith the Lord) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions." The foregoing was a prophecy of Joel, which the prince of apostles quoted thus, shortly after Pentecost, explaining in this way the wonders of which, at that time, Judea was witness. The miraculous signs, that were necessary for the establishment of the faith, were not to be perpetuated daily in the same profusion when the church would have become sufficiently strengthened and extended, so as to have less need of such assistance. Still, the Lord retained all His power; each century was to have its prodigies, and those ages which would be the nearest to the end of time, were to witness the revival and the multiplication of the marvels of the primitive church, precisely because the empire of evil was then to prevail to a greater degree.

Joel, in truth, in the text of which we make use, considers, in the foreground of his prophecy, the period following the captivity: *Et erit post hæc.* (1) After him, the apostle Saint Peter speaks first of his own times, which for the synagogue were those of the last days: *Et erit in novissimis diebus.* (2) The prophetic gaze of both however penetrated further; it contemplated the days which will precede the time of the coming of the Lord, of that great and horrible day, which will be illuminated by the universal manifestation of things: *Antequam veniat dies Domini mag-*

(1) Joel, ii, 28.
(2) Acts, ii, 17.

nus et horribilis (1), *dies Domini magnus et manifestus.* (2)

Tradition and the rules laid down by scholastic theology permit, and I will soon say, command that such shall be our understanding.

For, dearly beloved brethren, negation, although tardily, has however, in the end, shown its colors in this connection. Two distinct categories of objectors have arisen. There is nothing to astonish in this, when coming from materialists and deists: they are consistent with their impiety, when they reject any supernatural apparition, whether ancient or new.— What is more difficult of explanation is, that christians who admit the Word of God, nay further, that those especially who ground their belief upon the free and individual interpretation of His Word, should have laid down as a principle that God has, for the future, denied Himself the right of conversing with men, and that, henceforth, every private vision or revelation is either a chimera or a falsehood. It should be said that this assertion was soon combated in their own ranks, by an illimited multiplication of seers and illuminati.

Now, dearly beloved brethren, the authentic teaching of the church, the teaching of the doctors, of the councils and of the popes, has not remained silent upon this question. Without doubt, the sacred deposit of revelation was brought to a close with the apostolic era, in so far as concerns the truths which are to be believed by all the faithful. Differing from the old law, in which the Scriptural Canon remained open

(1) Joel, ii, 31. (2) Acts, ii, 20.

until the last days of Israel, ours is sealed by the prophecy of Saint John, which, besides, comprises the destinies of the church and of society, until the end of time. It does not, however, follow from this, that private revelation has been excluded from the economy of the new law. Reason alone teaches us, that God is always free to enter into relation with His creature, and the annals of the church show us, from century to century, great fruits of holiness obtained, great lights, and great graces conferred upon souls, most opportune consolations and guidance offered the christian people through the channel of these extraordinary communications. "At every epoch," says the Angel of the school, "there have always been some persons favored with supernatural lights, not that they might reveal a new doctrine of faith, but for the guidance of human conduct." (1)

III. The fifth Lateran Œcumenical Council, in reply to the first diatribes of the School of Luther, of which Melanchthon and the ecclesiastical historians of Magdeburg were about to constitute themselves the mouthpieces, has solemnly affirmed and vindicated this permanency of inspiration in the church; and it has not found it difficult to rest the same upon the authority of both the Old and New Testaments. "The Lord Himself," says the Council, "has pledged Himself to

(1) Et singulis temporibus non defuerunt aliqui prophetiæ spiritum habentes, non quidem ad novam doctrinam fidei depromendam, sed ad humanorum actuum directionem. 2a 2æ Quæst. CLXXIV, art. VI, ad tertium.

this, through the prophet Amos: *Ut per Amos prophetam ipse promittit.* (1)

I see impiety smile. O my brother, do not challenge this oracle too lightly. In the matter of political science, you have your own oracle, who is perhaps Machiavelli. To mention Machiavelli however—I am willing to admit the fact—it is to name a writer who has prosecuted the study of the history of human societies, with a most keen and practiced scent. Machiavelli has written, that "great events have never occurred in the world, without having been predicted, in some way or other." (2) Was he aware of the fact that he was translating that verse of Amos, to which the Council appears to have alluded? "*Quia non facit Dominus verbum, nisi revelaverit secretum suum ad servos suos prophetas*: For the Lord God doeth nothing, without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets." (3)

(1) The following is the text of the Council: "Cæterum, si quibusdam eorum Dominus futura quædam in Dei Ecclesia inspiratione quadam revelaverit, ut per Amos prophetam ipse promittit, et Paulus apostolus prædicatorum princeps: *Spiritum*, inquit, *nolite extinguere, prophetias nolite spernere* (I Thess. v), hos aliorum fabulosorum et mendacium gregi connumerari vel aliter impediri minime volumus. Extinguitur namque ipsius gratia spiritus, Ambrosio teste, si incipientibus loqui fervor contradictione sopitur: et tunc Spiritui sancto injuria certe fieri dicitur. Et quoniam res magni momenti est, eo quod non de facile credendum sit omni spiritui, sed sint probandi spiritus, teste Apostolo, an ex Deo proveniant (I Joan., iv.), volumus ut, lege ordinaria, etc." Constit, Leon X, *Supernæ majestatis præsidio*, edit. in concil. Later. V, sess. XI, apud Harduin, t. IX, p. 1806.

(2) Quoted by Joseph de Maistre, *Soirees de St. Petersburg. Entretien onzieme.*

(3) Amos, iii, 7.

You reply however, that one may be led far by this doctrine, and you inquire whether I do not see that it opens a field for thousands of visionaries?

Undoubtedly, my brethren, if there are real visions, there are false ones also; I grant even that, owing to the conditions of minds, especially at certain periods, a real vision may be the signal for a multitude of false visions. What is to be concluded from this? Must we rank in the same category what is true and what is false? The Council forbids our doing this very thing: *Hos aliorum fabulosorum et mendacium gregi connumerari minime volumus;* and its prohibition is fortified by the authority of the apostle, who, alongside of the principle, lays down the rule and the means for discriminating.

Be careful, says Saint Paul, that you "extinguish not the spirit. Despise not prophecies: *Spiritum nolite extinguere; prophetias nolite spernere.* But prove all things: hold fast that which is good: *Omnia autem probate: quod bonum est tenete.*" (1) It is in this manner that the church acts. She has been taught by Saint John, who says: "Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God." (2) And the discipline she has established in this regard, the jurisprudence she follows, the rules she has prescribed for herself, are, in truth, so wise, so scrupulous, so severe, that they exceed the exigencies of the most rigid human criticism. Then, when her conviction has become settled with reference to the value of the revela-

(1) I. Thess , v., 19, 20, 21.

(2) I. John, iv., 1.

tion, if she authorizes its belief, as well as the acts of piety connected with it, she however issues no command—imposes no obligation upon any one. In such matters, says Pope Benedict XIV, the custom of the church is to proceed by the channel of permission, but not by that of precept. (1)

Doubtless, he, who is conscious that God has spoken to him personally, owes God the assent of his faith, because it is the duty of the creature to "see that (it) refuse him not that speaketh: *Videte non recusetis loquentem.*" (2) If the communication thus delivered be destined to a third party, it is equally the duty of such third party to believe and obey God, as soon as sufficient proof shall have been furnished: no one has the right to evade an order which comes to him from heaven. As to others, as to the collective christian community, however, as a general rule, it is prescribed to no one to give attention and yield positive adhesion to these supernatural phenomena, (3) which are ardently sought after by all holy souls, who are anxious, even here below, to catch a glimpse of the countenance of the Lord; while, on the other hand, other dispositions, other constitutions, other characters, are met with, who shudder at such manifestations, because they are for them a subject of amazement and terror: "*Stupor apprehendit omnes, et repleti sunt timore dicen-*

[1] Bened. XIV, De Serv. Dei canonis, I. II. c. xxxii, 11, 12.

[2] Hebr., xii, 25.

(3) Suarez, De fide, disput. III, sect. X, n. 7.—Lugo, De Virt. fidei, disput. I, sect. XI, n. 228.—Bened. XIV, De Serv. Dei canonis., l. III, c. ultim., n. 12, 13, 14.

tes: Quia vidimus mirabilia hodie: And they were filled with fear, saying: We have seen wonderful things to-day." (1)

IV. These premises once established, I revert to the text of the prophet which has been appropriated by the apostle Saint Peter. Therefore, "in the last days (saith the Lord) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." Although this general effusion of the divine Spirit may be at first understood to refer to the justification and adoption of every baptized creature, of all flesh laved in the regenerating wave; the sequel however shows us, that it is not merely a question of the graces which relate to the personal salvation of those, by whom they are received, but more especially of the gifts gratuitously given, namely prophecy, miracle, apparitions, visions, revelations: *Et prophetabunt filii vestri et filiæ vestræ, et juvenes vestri visiones videbunt*— To this end, God will prefer to make use of children, of young men and of young girls: *Filii vestri et filiæ vestræ et juvenes vestri.* He will single them out from among those of modest and obscure rank: the shepherds of the desert or of the mountain, the poor shepherdess of the valley, youthful servants and humble waiting maids: *Et quidem super servos meos et super ancillas meas in diebus illis effundam de Spiritu meo, et prophetabunt.* (2)

As to the fruit, as to the result of these extraordinary manifestations, the prophet had expressed it in the preceding verse: "And you shall know that I am in

(1) Luc., v. 26.

[2] Acts, ii, 18; Joel, ii, 29.

the midst of Israel: *Et scietis quia in medio Israel ego sum.*" — "And I am the Lord your God, and there is none besides: *Ego Dominus Deus vester, et non est amplius.*" — "And my people shall not be confounded forever: *Et non confundetur populus meus in æternum.*" (1)

Is this not sufficient, my lords and my brethren, to warrant us now in approaching with confidence, and considering by the light of the divine torch furnished by Scripture and theology, the solemn act which is about to be accomplished, and which, in itself, assumes the proportions of a real prodigy?

For, in a word, are we not justified in saying here, with Saint John Chrysostom: "If you do not believe in words, believe in facts: *Si non verbo credis, rebus crede.*" (2)

V. I will be silent therefore, my brethren, in regard to the circumstances and the details of the marvelous event, whose entire framework and history are present to your minds. I will not call your attention to the fact, that not one of the signs of credibility, which are desirable on the part of the person, has been found wanting. "She must neither have asked nor desired graces of that kind," says Pope Benedict IX; "She must have consulted, in their regard, those who are invested with authority and light; it is necessary that she should have preserved tranquillity and freedom of soul, in the midst of these favors, that she should have excelled in humility and continued to practice mortification." (3)

[1] Joel, ii., 27.

(2) Homil. ante exil. T. III, edit. Gaume, col 495.

[3] De beatif. et canonis., lib. III, c. ult.

I shall not add that the tenor of the revealed matters lays itself in no manner open to objections: there is nothing new in the doctrine, since it is the confirmation, coming from the very lips of the immaculate Virgin, of the defined dogma of her Immaculate Conception; there is nothing contrary to christian morality, since it is an exhortation to prayer and penance.

I will not recall to mind, that far from showing the eagerness of fanatic credulity, the respectable pastor of the locality, the clergy of the country, the very prudent bishop of the diocese, on the contrary, maintained for several years a position conspicuous for reserve, silence and forbearance; which position was doubtless wise, but in presence of which, multitudes were scandalized and almost indignant, whilst beholding, on the one hand, the institution of measures of administrative violence, and the impious clamors which were not long in arising; and, on the other hand, being in presence of the striking cures which succeeded each other from day to day. Let us pass over all considerations of this nature, and speak only of that which is now before our eyes.

On the 23d of February, 1858, a poor girl believed that she had been charged, at the Massabielle Grotto, with the mission *of going to tell the priests that a chapel is to be built upon that spot, to which processions are to be made.* Eighteen years have elapsed since that time, and what a chapel and what processions do we contemplate! The chapel is an immense subterranean church, surmounted by a magnificent temple, which was yesterday consecrated by the venerable archbishop

of the capital of France, and which the Roman Pontiff had already baptized under the title of Basilica: a basilica which, despite its vast proportions, is insufficient in size, and therefore, blessed be the Lord, who, favoring us with auspicious weather, gives us as a temple, on this occasion, the immensity of surrounding space!

And as to the processions, each day witnesses the renewal of the spectacle they present. Do you see that procession of the human race advancing? Yesterday, the North and the South; to-morrow, the West and the East: England, Holland, America, how can I begin to enumerate? "*Ex omni tribu, et lingua, et populo, et natione:*" (1) They come "out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation." Such is the undoubted phenomenon, the phenomenon undeniably established. "If you do not believe the Word, you are, at all events, compelled to believe in the results: *Si non verbo credis, rebus crede.*"

In the second place, on the 25th of February, in the same year, the young girl received the order *to go and drink at the fountain;* and that fountain, which had not previously existed, as the entire population of the locality will testify, having begun to spring up beneath the fingers of the child, it has, from that moment never ceased to flow. Eighteen years have gone by, and the numbers of those who have drunk the water of the fountain of Lourdes, can no longer be calculated, and the entire universe resounds with facts relative to instantaneous cures, to manifest cures; so that, the argument upon which the church is wont to base her judg-

[1] Apocalypse, v. 9.

ment, the argument of divine attestation formulated through miracular agency, is here to be found, not merely in an accidental state, but indeed, in a permanent and almost continual condition. "*Si non verbo credis, rebus crede:* If you do not believe the child's word, you cannot refuse to believe the acts which have followed that word."

VI. God however does nothing without some motive or purpose. What then can be the Almighty's purpose in this case? Your question was answered yesterday, with rare eloquence; and it would be a great naiveté on my part were I to undertake to repeat that which has been said already so well. Still, I must beg my venerable brother's pardon, for the Lord Himself has replied to the inquiry beforehand, by the mouth of the prophet: "*Et scietis quia in medio Israel ego sum, ego Dominus Deus vester:* And you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel; and I am the Lord your God."

Ah! incredulous generation, thou wishest to believe only in reason and nature: for thee, thou hast said it, the order of faith and revelation does not exist; according to thy understanding, the Gospel is not sufficiently certified, the ordinary ministry of the church is not fully authorized. Will the omnipotent God, who has vouchsafed to communicate directly with the earth, will He draw back in presence of thy negations, or of thy scorn? Will he not rather respond to thy insulting challenge of His Almighty power? The men of the nineteenth century have said: The supernatural is at an end. And, all at once, behold how the supernat-

ural abounds, how it oozes out from the land and from the rock! how it gushes from the fountain — how it deploys in long swells the living waves of a stream of prayers, chants and lights! how it stoops and precipitates itself upon innumerable multitudes, which are carried away by the superior force of a current breaking through all obstacles.

O ye free thinkers! — ye have wished to believe neither in Moses, nor in the prophets, nor in Christ and His apostles, nor in the church and her solemn judgments! Still behold, here, in this mountain gorge, in a winding and alomost inaccessible defile of the Pyreness, Mary, mother of God, will appear and speak to an humble peasant girl; this country maiden will relate what she has seen — what she has heard. On another occasion, two children are present; (1) here, Bernadette is to be the only one to see and to hear. She will have for her support, neither the authority of Moses and of the prophets, nor that of Christ and of His apostles. The church herself, through her lower tribunal, by the sentence of the Ordinary, who is the bishop, will go no further than the delivering of a certificate of credibility, without imposing on any one an obligation either doctrinal or practical: provided the boundaries of respect are maintained, abstention is allowed. Yet, even under such conditions, belief imposes itself with such authority and efficacy, that the entire world is agitated. The impulse becomes so great, that the administration of

[1] Allusion to the apparition at La Salette.

the railway finds it difficult to satisfy the demand for transportation, the increase in which is such as to augment the wealth of the company, at a time, when owing to stagnation in business and the repercussion due to public calamities, its resources should have become impoverished: *Si non verbo credis, rebus crede.*

Ah! it is thus that the heavenly Physician exhibits an antidote for every vice. [1] Such is the powerful medication, which cures the unbelieving coldness of naturalism by applying its natural specific, at a maximum dose, at its greatest power, and at its highest degree of heat. [2] God, who carries in His hands the fountains of grace, and to whom the laws of nature are obedient, will so dispose events, that you will believe in Bernadette, and by this means, you will be brought back to believe in Himself: *Et scietis quia in medio Israel ego sum, ego Dominus Deus vester.*

VII. For, alas! dearly beloved brethren, it is not only to the God of the Gospel, and to the God of grace and revelation, but it is even to the God of reason and of nature, that a large number of our co-temporaries ought to be brought back. Let us proclaim the fact: those who make the loudest outcry against miracles, are precisely they who most stand in need of miracles. The miracles of the Old and New Testament suffice, they tell us. Yet, those who say this, are most commonly to be found amongst the unbelievers in both the

[1] Cœlestis medicus singulis quibusque vitiis obviantia adhibet medicamenta. S Greg., Homil. xxxii in Evang.

[2] Sicut arte medicinæ frigida calidis, ita Dominus noster contraria opposuit medicamenta peccatis.—*Ibid.*

Old Testament and the New Testament. Arguments dictated by human reason, they add, are sufficient to establish the existence of God. Do they pretend to teach this to us, who, in the Council of the Vatican, have pronounced anathema against whomsoever should refuse to reason the power of attaining, through the contemplation of the created world, unto the certain knowledge of God the Creator and the Master of the World? Nevertheless, soon after, we hear these very same avengers of reason rank the existence of God among the doubtful problems of science: benighted intellects whose eye, captivated by the ordinary spectacle of the universe, and the constant view of secondary causes with their regular laws and their invariable motions, lose sight at last of the First Cause! Well, Saint Augustin says, it is precisely for these men that God, in His mercy, has fittingly reserved, outside of the usual course of nature, works, not greater in themselves, but unwonted works, through whose agency He might awaken their attention, and demonstrate Himself to them with greater certainty. [1]

Say what you will, brethren, it is an established fact, that more than one atheistic philosopher has, on this spot, recovered the belief in God For my part, I knew a man of the world, a physician, brought up in the school of materialism, whom every argument had

(1) Quia miracula ejus quibus totum mundum regit universamque creaturam administrat, assiduitate viluerunt, ita ut nemo pene dignetur attendere,.....secundum suam ipsam misericordiam servavit sibi quædam quæ faceret opportuno tempore præter usitatum cursum naturæ, ut non majora sed insolita videndo, stuperent quibus quotidiana viluerant. S. Aug. in Evang. Joann. Tract. xxiv, I.

failed to bring back to God, during the phases of a very long illness; and who, all of a sudden, submitting, to his great skill in diagnosis, Bernadette's pathological case and the whole collection of the phenomena of Lourdes, began to recite the *credo*, "*I believe in God*," which he had forgotten for fifty years; and he did not long delay asking for, and receiving the sacraments of the church. Thus it is brethren, that God possesses direct means of His own for acting and persuading, which He does not grant even to the ordinary ministry of His church. He has His own way of giving "to His voice the voice of power: *Dabit voci suæ vocem virtutis*." [1] No one then can fail to recognize it, unless he belongs to the family of the asp, which is naturally deaf, and which, besides, stops its ears, in order not to hear: "*Sicut aspidis surdæ et obturantis aures suas*." [2] Let us admit, that when a miracle occurs in such proportions, when it breaks out suddenly, when it is renewed daily, when it disconcerts every prevision of art, when it puts at fault all the data of science, there is only one course to follow, and that is to bow down and recognize that God is always present in His works; always present in the creation and present in the church: *Et scietis quia in medio Israel ego sum, Dominus Deus vester.*

VIII. *Ego Dominus Deus vester, et non est amplius; et non confundetur populus meus in æternum.* Yes, my brethren, at this time, full of troubles and alarms; on the eve perhaps of the greatest commotions in the East,

(1) Ps. lxvii, 34.

(2) Ps. lvii, 5.

as well as in the West; when, humanly speaking, everything might be considered as lost, and when God, who has overthrown the conceits of the would-be wise, broken the limbs of the would-be strong, annihilated the action of the would-be skillful, and has positively withdrawn Himself from our midst; the event at Lourdes, the marvels of the sacred Grotto and of the holy fountain; in a word, the demonstrations of yesterday and of to-day, have proved to the earth, that God, —God in person—is still in the midst of Israel: *Et scietis quia in medio Israel ego sum:* He, the Lord, the Master, who does not abdicate, who cannot be dethroned, He, outside of whom, and in whose absence nothing exists: *Ego Dominus Deus vester, et non est amplius.* And, by this means, He has inspired us with the confidence, that His people are not to be forever given up to that confusion by which they appear to be enveloped at present: *Et non confundetur populus meus in æternum;* that, for France, especially, there will dawn a day of healing, of redress, of resurrection.

For, in truth, if particular infirmities are every day miraculously cured; can it be more difficult for God to effect, more difficult for the mother of God to obtain, the cure of christian society, that daughter of Abraham, who cannot remain thus bound by Satan; without a serious blow being struck at the cause of God upon earth? *Hanc autem filiam Abrahæ, quam alligavit Satanas, non oportuit solvi vinculo isto!* (1)

It is this hope, my lords and dearly beloved brethren, it is this firm and certain expectation of delivery,

(1) Luke, xiii, 16.

that we will all bear away to our homes from this solemnity. Notwithstanding their vain efforts to elevate themselves and to grow greater, men continue to descend an inclined plane. Every would-be deliverer who appears at the horizon is not long before falling to a lower depth than did his predecessor; it is, as it were, a competition and rivalry set up between the impotence of the one, and that of the other. Since the time that "the Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any who understand and seek God: *Dominus de cœlo prospexit super filios hominum, ut videat si est intelligens aut requirens Deum:*" (1) for, let it be well understood, that in the social order, there is no intelligent worker, save he who upholds the right, and who gives God the share to which He is entitled in the government of human societies; since the time—I repeat—that the divine gaze has been directed in vain towards the children of men, "they are all gone aside; they are become unprofitable together: *Omnes declinaverunt, simul inutiles facti sunt.*" [2] Notwithstanding talents and examples of devotion, which, it were unpardonably unjust not to recognize, "*none, no, not one*" has been found capable of doing good seriously, and of procuring the salvation which the country expects: *Non est qui faciat bonum, non est usque ad unum.* [3]

Still, however deplorable the decadence and the nullity of men, nothing is lost, and our confusion will not

[1] Ps. xiii, 2.
[2] Ps. xiii, 3.
[3] Ps. xiii, 3.

last forever, since God condescends to show Himself in the midst of His people. To have God on one's side, and as an auxiliary, is to possess every thing, even when nothing else remains: *Et scietis quia in medio Israel ego sum, ego Dominus vester, et non est amplius ; et non confundetur populus meus in æternum.*

IX. Let us bring this discourse to an end. The Gospel tells us, and the church reminded us of the fact yesterday, that an humble virgin of Judea "rising up in those days, went unto the hill country with haste, into a city of Judea." [1] And there, this maiden, towards whom, up to that time, public attention had never been attracted, felt her spirit rejoice in the Lord, and by a prediction, whose fulfillment, humanly speaking, was most improbable, she announced, that, from henceforth, all generations should call her blessed: *Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.* [2]

I cannot say, whether or not, it was then given to Mary to behold, beneath her gaze, the unfolding of all the details of the marvelous fulfillment of this prophecy, at every point upon the globe, and until the end of time. But, without the slightest doubt, the coronation of the immaculate Virgin, which is, just now, about to take place, upon this plateau of the Pyrenees, will resound throughout the ages, and unto the highest heavens, as one of the most magnificent echoes of the canticle sung, nearly eighteen centuries ago, in the mountains of Judea.

[1] Luke, i, 39. Exurgens autem Maria in diebus illis, abiit in montana cum festinatione in civitatem Juda.

[2] Luke, i, 48.

Yes, the entirety of living christianity, and heaven in unison with the earth are about to proclaim Mary blessed, at the moment when Pius IX, by the ministry of his venerable delegate, will, on this day, crown his own definition, by crowning the image of her, who, on this very spot, named and declared herself to be the "Immaculate Conception." O Mary, you could say this to the world, only after the Vicar of your Son had published it to the church; but, in response to the oracle of the Vatican, the oracle of Lourdes has been received with enthusiasm by all who are solicitous for thy glory, as well as for the prerogatives of the Roman pontificate. [1]

From this day forward, Lourdes is destined to become still more endeared to christian piety. In truth, it is good to be here, and willingly would one make here a tabernacle, not for self only, but also, for all near and dear. [2]

Here, one breathes an atmosphere, and enjoys a state of well-being, of calm and of suavity, which are a foretaste of heaven; and when one has climbed this mountain, the impression, as it were, suggests itself, so

[1] Revelationes privatæ per se non pertinent ad depositi fidei catholicæ explicationem promovendam, ad quam Christus Dominus ministerium ordinarium in visibili capite Ecclesiæ, ut principio et fundamento unitatis fidei, et in successione apostolica cœpiti unita, instituit sub promissione infallibilis assistentiæ, non autem, sub directione per novas revelationes. Hinc est quod inter rationes ob quas privatæ revelationes suspectæ videri possent, juxta Benedictum XIV (De canoniz. Sanct., l. III, c 53, no. 8), recensetur illa "si revelatum dicatur quod adhuc sit sub judicio Ecclesiæ." J. B. Franzelin, Tract. de divina Revelatione, sect. IV, p. 235.

[2] Matth. xvii, 4.

naturally, that, I will not say half, but three-quarters, of the road leading to paradise have been traversed. Here, it seems as though something of the transfigured countenance of Francis Soubirous' pure and unaffected daughter were reflected upon every forehead. Here, the ordinary preoccupations of earthly life are accounted as nothing. And, as in heaven, where great multitudes will be assembled, the spiritualized bodies will not be the cause of any constraint and hindrance to each other; so, here, it is, as though only soul comes in contact with soul, and the crowding together of multitudes has for its only effect, as in the heavenly Jerusalem, the joy occasioned by the participation of all in the happiness of each: *Cujus participatio ejus in idipsum.* [1] And Lourdes resembles Rome in this, that, leave taking is always softened by the hope of return.

Most Holy Lady and queen of heaven and earth, thou hast indeed shown by thy language, that thou art truly of the family of Him, who, *with great favor*, disposes of the humblest of His creatures: *Et cum magna reverentia disponis nos.* [2] "Do me the favor" —these are thine own words to this poor child—"do me the favor of coming here for a fortnight."

Is it not this same invitation, O Mary, which is whispered in our ears, when we feel, that all the powers of our soul conspire to retain us at this spot, and all the aspirations of our hearts tend towards our returning hither? But we can not dispose of our own

[1] Ps. cxxi, 3.
[2] Wisdom, xii, 18.

time: we may be tied down by a thousand obstacles. It behooves us therefore, O amiable mother, O admirable mother, to say to thee, before turning our footsteps hence: "Grant us the grace of coming again to thy shrine more than once!" And, since, to-day, we are prostrate at thy feet, ah! from the hollow of the Grotto, from the crevices in the rock, show us thy countenance, and let thy voice sound in our ears: *In foraminibus petræ, in caverna maceriæ, ostende mihi faciem tuam, sonet vox tua in auribus meis.* For, from this moment, in so far as we are permitted to enjoy them, "thy voice is sweet, and thy face is beautiful: *Vox enim tua dulcis, et facies tua decora.*" [1] As the fruit of this day and of this solemnity, obtain for ourselves and for others, that greatest of all graces, purity of life: *Vitam præsta puram;* level the road still before us, in order that the remainder of our journey upon earth may be made easy: *Iter para tutum;* until the hour, when, already transfigured and semi-beatified by the light of thy countenance, we will be admitted to contemplate, with thee, face to face, thy Son Jesus; and when crowned by His hands, as well as by thine; and after having shared the felicity of crowning thee upon earth, we will participate with thee in the joys and glory of eternal happiness: *Ut videntes* JESUM *semper collætemur.* AMEN.

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[1] Cantic. ii, 14.

NOTE.—Since the occurrence of the events recorded in the preceding pages, the illustrious author of the foregoing magnificent discourse, the Right Reverend Louis Edward Pie, the modern Hilary of Poitiers, and the Most Reverend Jules-Florien Desprez, Archbishop of Toulouse and Narbonne, have been elevated to the Cardinalate by his Holiness Pope Leo XIII.

CHAPTER XX.

PIUS IX AND OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

What that great Pope did to promote the extension of devotion to the Immaculate Virgin throughout the universe, and what should be the influence of his example upon every member of the Catholic Church.

God willed, during this century, to heap His favors upon the world through the instrumentality of the most Blessed Virgin. It was therefore necessary, that the Blessed Virgin should be better known, than at any previous epoch. Pius IX was the Pontiff, chosen by heaven, to cause the plenitude of light to shine throughout the church upon the mother of the Saviour of the world. Until the middle of this century, one of the most exalted privileges of the most Blessed Virgin had remained overshadowed by a veil: her Immaculate Conception had not, as yet, been declared a dogma of faith. Although this was the sentiment of the church, as manifested in her liturgy; still she had not imposed the obligation of its belief upon the faithful; she had pronounced no dogmatic definition upon this subject. Thus this exalted privilege of the Virgin remained in the shade, and, as it were, hidden under a veil.

In defining that Mary was conceived without stain; in declaring, and affirming, as a dogma of faith, that the future mother of the Incarnate Word triumphed in her conception, over the serpent, that old enemy of the human race, whose head she forever crushed with her conquering heel; Pius IX has caused all the shades to disappear, has lifted every veil, and has occasioned, for all future ages, the rising of the plenitude of light upon the most holy mother of God; upon whose head He has placed a crown of infinite splendor, the only one wanting to her glory, and which it was in the power of the church militant to bestow. Thus, by that dogmatic definition, Pius IX became the supreme illuminator of the most Blessed Virgin. He becomes so additionally, by collecting, as in a sheaf, in His Bull, all the teachings of antiquity, of the fathers and of doctors and saints, relative to this holy Virgin; for by this bundle of light, he raises the minds of the children of the church to the highest knowledge they may attain, in this world, of the most august mother of God. That which Jesus Christ said to His Father: "I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given me out of the world," that is to say, I have made Thee wholly known, such as Thou art, *Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus*,[1] Pius IX can repeat to Mary:

"Thy title of Immaculate, O most holy mother of God, was included in the mysterious deposit of revelation, from which I have disclosed it, bringing it into the full light of day, by defining, as a truth of faith, that thy Conception was Immaculate; and by this

[1] John, xvii, 5.

definition, I have completed the manifestation to the world, of thy name of mother of God, and the manifestation likewise of all thy grandeurs."

It is not difficult to realize what must have been the sentiments of the most Blessed Virgin in regard to Bernadette when she said to her: "I am the Immaculate Conception," and also it is not difficult to realize what must have been her sentiments in regard to the Pontiff who had defined the Immaculate Conception to be an article of faith! Doubtless, the heart of no pope could be more inclined than his to honor and to cause others to honor the holy Virgin, who four years after the oracle of the Vatican, herself affirmed that which the infallible authority of the Vicar of her Son had defined. The Pontiff of the Immaculate Conception could not be other than the Pontiff of Our Lady of Lourdes. And the world recognized and admired this feature in the immortal Pius IX. His gaze and his heart were directed towards and remained riveted upon the sanctuary of the apparitions. And this great Pope never ceased to consider the immaculate Virgin as the hope of the world, and the assured pledge of the triumph of the church. He desires that Our Lady of Lourdes shall inhabit the Vatican, in whose most august sanctuary he places her, with his own hands.

Let us again listen to his words:

"In the Vatican palace there is a sanctuary, wherein dwells the Blessed Sacrament, and to which the Pope alone has access. Here, in the presence of Jesus Christ, he spends four hours every day praying and reciting his breviary. It is to this retreat that he re-

sorts, when the iniquities of men so overburthen his heart, as to cause him to shed tears.....And it is here, that the representation of Our Lady of Lourdes shall be placed."

His heart is however not satisfied at beholding her only during the solemn hours of prayer, in this favored sanctuary. He also desires to see her, during those fleeting moments, when, in captivity, he descends into the gardens of the Vatican to breathe the free air of heaven. He has, therefore, had a grotto erected exactly similar to that of Lourdes, with a basin containing water from the miraculous fountain. There, he pauses, kneels at the feet of Our Lady of the Pyrenees, praying to her, with effusion, for the city and for the universe, *Urbi et Orbi.*

Who does not perceive, that this devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes at the Vatican, affords a striking proof of the personal devotion of Pius IX? And, who does not perceive, further, that this is a public action on the part of the sovereign Pontiff, through which he invites the entire church to imitate his example? And his public actions performed as universal Pontiff of the church, with the intention of causing Our Lady of Lourdes to be honored, will be followed by fresh deeds until the close of the earthly career of this great Pope.

With what liberality does he not open the treasury of spiritual graces, on behalf of the sanctuary of the ap paritions? And behold! he erects and founds, in favor of all pilgrims, an arch-confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady of Lourdes, which he endows and enriches with spiritual blessings and priv-

ileges. His desire is, that affiliated confraternities shall spring into existence in every part of the world.

Pius IX speaks of Our Lady of Lourdes, in the following confident terms, when writing, on the 24th of July, 1873, to the deputies of the French National Assembly, who had forwarded to him an address from Paray-le-Monial.

"We have entertained no doubt, dearly beloved sons, that it would be granted us to behold the rising of the sun of justice in France, after the tedious duration of the darkness of error, from the moment we perceived that this sun was manifestly preceded by that most joyous aurora, the mother of grace. She it is, who by her presence has, in an admirable manner, awakened this nation from its slumbers; she who has sweetly attracted the people; she who has won the hearts of all these eager multitudes, by the bestowal of countless benefits, in order that she might unite them all into a kingdom for her Son.

"You have already, dearly beloved sons, experienced the influence of that most sweet mother; you have already gone straight to her, committing yourselves confidently to her protection; and already, of your own accord, you consecrate to her your persons, all your possessions, and your country.

"The crowded ranks of these legions of christians of both sexes really present a spectacle worthy of angels and of men; for, uninvited by the ecclesiastical authority, it must be said, to its great joy, and under the control of its moderating influence, they press forward spontaneously towards the sanctuaries, where

they beg pardon for having remained away from God so long, and tender the offering of a contrite and humble heart, which cannot meet with a refusal."

Pius IX, after having pointed out the source of the evil and of the errors of the last century, and the abuse of force, expresses himself as follows:

"Our joy is extreme, on beholding that the return of France to God is attended with splendor, and that the movement is headed by those who are delegated to watch over the affairs of the people, to legislate, and to govern the commonwealth; and also headed by those who, owing to their position in command of the land and naval forces, give renewed vigor to the national strength.

"This accord of law and might in paying homage to the Most High, to whom belong wisdom and power, foretokens a future, in which the reign of error is soon to be destroyed, and in which, therefore, the cause of our ills is to be extirpated by the roots; at the same time, it holds out the hope of a perfect organization of things, of a solid tranquillity, and of a plenary restoration of the greatness and glory of France. He, who is great in power, in judgment and in justice, will grant wisdom, intelligence and firmness to those who believe in Him with perfect hearts, and He will distribute munificently His gifts of grace among those who have consecrated themselves to Him, and who hope in Him. This is what we augur for yourselves and for your country."

Let us now consider Pius IX giving, as sovereign Pontiff to Our Lady of Lourdes, the highest proof of his veneration and filial devotion. The supreme ruler of the church cannot go further than he does in his manifestations of love. He consecrates her sanctuary, her chapel, upon which he bestows the title of Basilica; he crowns the immaculate Virgin, and he wills that the coronation shall take place at Lourdes, with the same pomp, as would be observed, did he himself deposit the crown upon the brow of the queen of heaven.

He desires Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of Paris—the prelate who consecrates the basilica in his name—to wear the Pallium during the mass celebrated on the day of the coronation; and, at the close of the mass, to give the papal benediction, with plenary indulgence to all present. The portrayal of this solemnity is still present to our gaze, and this action of Pius IX will never be blotted out from our memories; it is, we repeat, the greatest homage a pope could pay Our Lady of Lourdes. The prisoner of the Vatican was there, in spirit, and represented by his delegate, at the head of one hundred and thirty bishops, three thousand priests, and a hundred thousand catholics, gathered together from all parts of the world. This assembly represented the church, whom Pius IX caused to prostrate herself humbly, along with himself, at the feet of the crowned Virgin.

Even if it be impossible for Pius IX to go any farther, and if this action reach the boundaries of his power and of the manifestation of his filial love to-

wards the immaculate Virgin, he will nevertheless continue, until his last breath, to occupy a position no less elevated than that taken by him in the instances above mentioned: he will avail himself of every opportunity to affirm his work. Let us listen to him, when he replied to the address which the bishops, assembled at Lourdes for the coronation, had forwarded to him, before dispersing to their several dioceses. He speaks not only to these bishops, but to the entire church, whilst declaring his sentiments in regard to Our Lady of Lourdes.

BRIEF

TO THE BISHOPS ASSEMBLED AT LOURDES.

To our dear son Joseph-Hippolytus Guibert, Cardinal-priest of the holy Roman Church, titular of Saint John at the Latin Gate, by the favor of the Holy See, Archbishop of Paris; and to our venerable Brethren, the archbishops and bishops assembled for the solemnity at Lourdes,

PIUS IX, POPE.

Dear Son and venerable Brethren, greeting and apostolic benediction.

When we prescribed that the consecration of the church at Lourdes, and the coronation of the venerable statue honored in that locality should be made, our intention was not only to give public proof of our devotion towards the holy mother of God; but we wished also, in presence of the calamities by which the christian religion is threatened at the present time, to supply a new stimulus to the piety of the faithful, in France especially, in order to induce them to claim more earnestly the assistance of our heavenly Patroness, and to have increased confidence in her powerful protection. We were rejoiced to learn by your letter

of July 4th, that you all displayed the greatest zeal in executing our design, and that a part of the object we had in view has already been attained, since countless throngs of the pious faithful, following your example have hastened to the holy basilica in order to honor the immaculate Virgin and implore her assistance.

This brilliant manifestation of faith and piety fills us with happiness, and authorizes us to conceive the hope that Almighty God, in deference to the supplications of His holy mother, will not only save your illustrious nation, but the entire christian people from the tempest and the dangers which threaten at the present period; that He will comfort the afflicted, strengthen the weak, give sight to the blind, bring sinners back to the salutary path of repentance, and finally restore to human society, subverted by so many shocks, that peace we have so long demanded. What now remains to be accomplished, is to watch that this ardor of devotion, which had just been displayed in so marvelous a manner, far from cooling, shall increase and extend farther and farther. We feel assured that, in accord with the other bishops of the catholic universe, you will labor to bring about this result. In the meanwhile, it is our pleasing duty to praise you for what you have done, up to the present time, and to thank you for the sentiments you have expressed in our regard. At the same time, as a pledge of the divine blessing, and as a testimonial of our particular affection, we grant, in the Lord, our apostolic benediction to you, our dear son; to you also, venerable brethren;

and to the clergy and faithful entrusted to your pastoral vigilance.

Given at Rome, near Saint Peter's, on the 22nd day of July, of the year 1876, and the thirty-first of our Pontificate.

PIUS IX, POPE.

The magnanimous heart of Pius IX does not rest content with having crowned Our Lady of Lourdes under circumstances of splendor unparalleled in this century. It suffices not for his solicitude and love to say to the bishops assembled at Lourdes, and through them to the entire episcopate: "What now remains to be accomplished, is to watch, that this ardor of devotion, which has just been displayed in so marvelous a manner, far from cooling, shall increase and extend farther and farther. We feel assured that, in accord with the other bishops of the catholic universe, you will labor to bring about this result." The Pontiff who glorified the immaculate Virgin discovers, in the inexhaustible fecundity of his genius and expansive heart, still another means of honoring her in her sanctuary at Lourdes, and of offering her a new proof of his veneration and love. From the Vatican, where he is, like another Saint Paul, a prisoner for Christ's sake, *Vinctus Christi*, he sends two golden palms to Our Lady of Lourdes. He deputes an ambassador of his own selection, a canon of the illustrious chapel of Saint Peter in the Vatican, the Most Reverend Folicardi, archbishop of Amata; and in order that the whole of Rome

might be represented on this occasion, he desires that sixty-five priests, twenty-four laymen, and seventeen Roman ladies should surround his envoy when about to present his precious offering to the Virgin, whom Pius IX addresses in the following language, whilst performing this solemn action:

"These palms, O immaculate Virgin, which, as the successor of Saint Peter, I offer thee, are the symbols of thy victory. Thou hast conquered from the very beginning, from the moment of thy conception; from that first instant of thy life, thou hast laid thy victorious heel upon the head of the serpent, which thou hast crushed for evermore. Thou hast successively overcome and dealt the death-blow to all heresies throughout the world: *Tu cunctas haereses sola interemisti in universo mundo.* Thou hast triumphed at Ephesus: the impious Nestorious denied thy right to the title of mother of God, and the Œcumenical Council placed upon thy brow the diadem of divine maternity, amidst the plaudits of the whole universe.

"Thou hast conquered at Rome. Thy Immaculate Conception had not yet been, under our pontificate, declared a dogma of faith. And the entire church, which sighed after that definition, felt a thrill of unutterable rapture, when, by our infallible authority, we defined, as a revealed truth, that thou wert conceived without stain; and when, with our own hands, we deposited this new diadem upon thy head.

"Thou hast conquered at Lourdes; triumphing over the indifference and incredulity of this age, thou hast given to the catholic world an impulse of faith and

love; and out of these multitudes gathered together from different parts of the globe, thou hast formed for thy Son a kingdom of believers, of devoutly faithful servants, and of magnanimous apostles. Thy victory shone resplendent with full lustre upon the day of thy coronation.

"Thou wilt continue to conquer, O immaculate Virgin; and this century, to which the name of Mary's age has been given, will again prove, for thee, the century of the most brilliant victories.

"I place at thy feet a twofold golden palm, the one, as a symbol of thy victory, and the other, as a symbol of the victory of thy children; they will conquer through thee, and thou shalt conquer in them. Thus will these two palms remain forever joined, divinely united!

"Entwine them, O immaculate Virgin, over the brows of all the children of the church during the combats of life; and bend them over, with increased love, at their last hour, at the moment of their death. O immaculate Virgin, grant that Pius IX and all his children may contemplate, in heaven, the two palms which they offer thee on this day!"

After this offering, the magnanimous Pontiff, until the close of his life, was unremitting in his devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. On the 2nd of February, 1878, his heart must have experienced some of the emotions which agitated the holy old man Simeon, whilst holding in his arms the Child-God, and saying to him:—*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, secundum verbum tuum in pace.* The 7th of February was the date set apart by God, from all eternity, for the delivery of the one, who

was a prisoner for His sake. Heaven was preparing to celebrate the glorious anniversaries of the apparitions of the immaculate Virgin at Lourdes; Pius IX was to witness the festivities in that other world—our true country. On that day, all his fetters burst asunder, and the heavens opened to receive the Pontiff who glorified the spotless Virgin. The moment of triumph is at hand, the sufferings of the martyr, the labors of the Pontiff, are forever engulfed in celestial glory and happiness! Palm is returned for palm! Crown for crown! On the part of Jesus Christ and of his blessed mother, what a prodigality of munificence, and how great the divine joy displayed upon their countenances on receiving, into heaven, their dearly beloved Pontiff! With their own hands, Jesus Christ and the immaculate Virgin place the crown of justice on his forehead: through them too, the whole celestial court participates in his coronation!—Thus glorified, they cause this Pontiff to be seated upon the throne prepared for him, amidst the greatest pontiffs of the church. And then occurs, with all its intensity, the fulfillment of the thrilling of his soul in God, which is to last as long as God Himself! It is the torrent of infinite felicity forever poured forth from the bosom of God into the soul of the crowned Pontiff! O Life, which is the true life! O sovereign possession of God! O union with God! O entire enjoyment of God! O consciousness of the eternal duration of this union and enjoyment! O contemplation, O certainty of that eternity increasing each instant a hundred fold, the divine blessedness of

the soul, and conferring upon enjoyment unutterable additions of delights! The ecstasy of heaven, however, far from lessening the zeal of Pius IX, increases it continually. He thus continues to be the Pontiff of the immaculate Virgin. Here below, he wished to extend devotion to her, unto the extremities of the earth, to cause all peoples to prostrate themselves before her altars and her cherished image. His power will be still greater in heaven, than it was in this land of exile, for the realization of his holy undertaking, for the conquest of subjects and children devoted to the queen of angels and of men, to the mother of God.

His deeds, his words, and his example, seem to be endowed with additional power, since it has pleased God to crown him; he is now dearer to us, and our hearts are even more disposed to obey him.

Now, what Jesus Christ said to His apostles, and through them to the entire church militant: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also: *Exemplum enim dedi vobis ut quemadmodum Ego feci, ita et vos faciatis*," (1) Pius IX repeats to us, by applying these words to what he has done for the immaculate Virgin—for Our Lady of Lourdes: "O princes of the church, O bishops, O envoys of the Gospel, O missionaries of all religious orders, O all ye simple faithful, ye know what proofs of veneration and filial love I gave to the immaculate Virgin, to Our Lady of Lourdes, while I was in your midst. I placed her in the most august sanctuary of the Vatican, and

(1) Joan. xiii, 15.

each day, for several hours, I knelt at her feet, recommending to her your souls, the interests of the whole church, supplicating her that we might experience the effects of her influence and maternal intercession upon her divine Son.

"In order to favor the current of popular devotion which was setting in towards her sanctuary, I opened the entire treasury of graces belonging to the church. In order to show the christian people that there is no honor too great for this Holy Virgin, I myself desired to consecrate the sanctuary of her apparitions, and I wished, in presence of the universe, to crown her with my own hands.

"Finally, I laid at her feet, two golden palms, the eternal symbol of her triumphs, and of those of the christian people throughout the world. Thus, following our example, pray daily to this holy mother.

"As she inhabited my palace of the Vatican, so may she abide in all your residences, as their guardian and sovereign. As I consecrated the entire church to her, placing it beneath her sceptre, so, throughout the universe, do you consecrate to her all the different churches, which are but so many daughters of the mother church—the church of Rome. Build in her honor splendid sanctuaries, crown her with pomp, so that in both hemispheres, the people may have recourse to Our Lady of Lourdes—the immaculate Virgin—in these sanctuaries erected in the large centres, and abounding in all the treasures of her clemency, and all the miracles of her love.

"The Virgin came down from heaven, at Lourdes, where she established her principal sanctuary, whence, however, she desires to advance unto the most remote boundaries of the earth, repeating the same language everywhere, and also everywhere renewing the same miracles. She says to her Son: 'All these peoples whom Thou, whilst hanging upon the cross, hast given me, I wish to gather them together, and for this purpose, I desire to travel in every land, to encompass the earth, and to be with all who proclaim the Gospel, sustaining their strength, firing their hearts, in order that every thing may yield to the eloquence of Thy envoys.'

"O happy ambassadors of Jesus Christ, let your souls expand beneath the sway of hope and joy! The spotless Virgin, the Immaculate Conception, that is to say the Virgin of Victory, is with you; she evangelizes with you, she combats with you; with you and through you, she desires to complete the conquest she has begun on behalf of her Son, of all the peoples whom He inherited."

O dearly beloved Pontiff, O Pius IX, who didst glorify the immaculate Virgin, animated by thy deeds, thy words, and thy example, all the members of the church, pastors as well as simple faithful, will emulate in apostolic ardor, to make her, who is the Gate of Heaven, known to all the nations of the earth.

O Pontiff, forever dear, during over thirty years thou didst present our souls to God, thou didst not cease to screen them with the infinite merits of Jesus Christ.

From Rome, thy hand blessed the city and the universe. Thou hadst accustomed us to thy apostolic benedictions and to the tender effusions of thy paternal love. We all realized that in thee we possessed a father's heart, an advocate, and a powerful mediator with Jesus Christ. By the definition of the Immaculate Conception, thou hast enkindled throughout the entire church the most pure flame of filial love towards the Blessed Virgin; and we organized festivities, causing us to experience raptures, which are a glimpse and a foretaste of heaven. And when lately thou didst crown the mother of God, thou hast renewed these holy joys, and this gladness, whereby thou hast succeeded in enkindling love in our hearts, and in binding us to our dear mother by ever-enduring bonds.

The immaculate Virgin, the mother of God, is, today, fully known, tenderly loved and faithfully served upon earth. And she owes this to thee. Thou art her illuminator. Thou art the revealer of her immaculate heart, so that, if, by thy teachings, we see in her a queen sovereignly worthy of our homage, we also behold in her a mother, whom we can no longer abstain from loving.

Exiles that we are, we sigh for our country; struggling against ourselves, the world and hell, we yearn for the rest, which will follow the eternal victory. May the time of our entry into the living city of the Lord come at last. May Jesus Christ, who has given us the power of becoming children of God, finally complete His work in us! Children of God, may our resem-

blance to Him be instantaneously apparent! May we be transformed into Him, and become His living images! May every thing in us be divine! Children of God, may our intellects, which thirst after light, be finally elevated unto the light of the Word; and plunged endlessly into those inacessible abysses of the uncreated light, eternally deluged by the waters of those abysses, divinely strengthened by the brilliancy of that uncreated light and united therewith, may we be so inexpressibly exalted as to penetrate into the Invisible, eternally revealed divine essence!

And, in God thus contemplated face to face, thus revealed in His very being, may we see the Incarnate Word, the immaculate Virgin, and all the heavenly court; and may Christ, the Blessed Virgin, the saints, and the blessed spirits manifest themselves in all their glory and sanctity!

And, through such visions, may our intellects be thrown into endless series of ecstasies, which will constantly heighten in degree.

Children of God, our hearts thirst after loving eternally and immeasurably Him, who has raised us to this divine dignity. May then our hearts be united to the Holy Ghost, who is the living and infinite love of the Father and of the Word; and entirely surrounded, penetrated, fired by His flames, may we begin to love God, with a love wholly divine, and during ages everlasting! May this thirst after love be finally quenched at the fountain-head of love, in the bosom of God!—May our hearts, agreeably to the language of Jesus

Christ, enter upon the enjoyment of our God, in the ocean of His happiness and love! *Intra in gaudium Domini tui!* May all our affections be concentrated in loving Him who gives Himself to us without reserve, whose love is eternally overflowing, and who unceasingly creates for us inexpressible ecstasies and unutterable inebriation of delights! For, the heart, beholding its loving faculties, eternally overflowed by the love of God, and overcome eternally by the infinite weight of His felicity and love, finds in these mysterious dealings a plenitude of happiness and a supreme exercise of love. The heart enraptured, feels that God whom it loves inexpressibly, can alone worthily love Himself, and that compared with His ineffable love, that of the entire heavens is as naught; the heart also offers, as a worthy tribute to the Divine Majesty, all His infinite love, with all the infinite love of Jesus Christ, and all the love of the immaculate Virgin, and of the saints and of the blessed spirits!

CHAPTER XXI.

AD TE SUSPIRAMUS

O CLEMENS, O PIA, O DULCIS

VIRGO MARIA!

And thou, immaculate Virgin, most holy mother of God and our mother, when shall we behold thee in heaven! There only, wilt thou appear unto us, as thou art!

We will not cease repeating to thee, that however dazzling the light which thou sheddest here below in thy apparitions; it is not, no it is not the light manifested in thee in heaven. This light, which crowns thee, at the right hand of thy divine Son, so far surpasses that of the apparitions, that no eye can contemplate it upon earth. It is invisible in its nature—in its essence; it is invisible, owing to its infinite brilliancy! This light is God Himself: God invisible for us, so long as we are on earth, and becoming visible to the gaze of our souls, only in heaven.

O Mary, it is in this ocean of light, that thou art engulfed; and it is in this light, which is vouchsafed only in heaven, that we desire to contemplate thee! *Ad Te Suspiramus!* However dazzling may be the beauty revealed in thee, during apparitions; it is not, no it is not

the beauty which heaven enraptured contemplates in the mother of God! Between these two orders of beauty, as between these two kinds of light, there lie abysses whose depths are unfathomable. Thy beauty in heaven is the communication of the uncreated, infinite beauty of God; a beauty invisible by its nature, because of its infinite excellence, and which, by the illumination of the light of the Word, can be contemplated only in heaven. It is communicated in such proportions, that the light of thee throws the entire heavens into an inexpressible and eternal ecstasy! It surpasses ineffably the united beauty of all in heaven; so that, next to the beauty of the Incarnate Word, thou wilt be the incomparable beauty—the most stupendous miracle of the power and love of God! It is in this divine beauty, and not in that of the apparitions, that we desire, O immaculate Virgin, our mother, to behold thee, wholly reflecting the splendor of God, in God! *Ad Te Suspiramus!*

O Mary, by the contemplation in heaven of thy glory and beauty, the intensity of the eternal happiness caused thereby, creates, as it were, in the soul an ecstasy of bliss, with which the contemplation of all the transitory joys of the apparitions, here below, can bear no comparison!

These apparitions, during our exile, are evanescent: they resemble fleeting hours, and are in life like unto flashes of lightning. Even didst thou renew, upon earth, all the apparitions with which souls have been favored, up to the present time; that relatively would

be little, and would merely enkindle in us a more ardent desire to behold thee in heaven as thou art. Whatever is not eternal is nothing! The duration of all these apparitions taken collectively does not even amount to an instant, when compared with eternity! It is therefore during eternity that we wish to contemplate thee in thy light and in thy beauty! And we know that when in heaven contemplating thee, there we will realize the certainty of beholding thee eternally! We long for the security and the peace of heaven: this security and this peace we will find in our possession of God. United with God, and possessing Him in our inmost souls; we will have nothing to fear, either from the world, or from our own fragility, or from hell.

We will be able to exclaim: O Mary, the happiness which enraptures us on beholding thee, no power can interrupt during all eternity! For its disturbance, it would be necessary that the sway of the Omnipotent and Eternal Ruler over us should cease! We know however, O holy mother, that he, in whom God dwells, shall not be disturbed for all eternity! *In æternum non commovebitur!* In this security and in this peace, the ecstasy of our eternal contemplation of thee, O Mary, will be incessantly augmented by the certainty that we will be forever in thy presence, and eternally enraptured by the sight of thee; so that our hearts, besides their present felicity, will abound with emotions of the happiness we will enjoy for all eternity!

Thus then, O holy Virgin, our mother, we will not cease to sigh after thee, until we shall, at length, be-

hold thee in heaven seated at the right hand of thy divine Son! Then only will all our aspirations be fulfilled. Then only, wilt thou appear to us, as thou art, in all thy glory—in all thy ineffable beauty. With the light of our intellects illumined by the divine light of the Word, we will realize all the great things which God has wrought in thee; thy Immaculate Conception, thy victory over the devil and hell, thy sanctity from the first instant of thy creation, the prodigious augmentation of thy holiness, love and merits, until the hour of thy divine maternity; the overflowing plenitude of grace which then overshadowed thee; and, in virtue of that infinite dignity of mother of God, all the miraculous additions to thy sanctity, love and merits, until the day of thy Assumption into heaven, and of thy exaltation to the right hand of thy divine Son!

We will behold how immeasurably higher is thy sanctity, than the collective holiness of all in heaven, and how inconceivably greater is thy glory than theirs! We will comprehend that thou art the masterpiece of all God's miracles; and then, there will arise in us an infinite desire of praising, exalting, and blessing thee! In union with the entire hierarchy of the heavenly spirits, with all the saints in paradise, we will magnify thy grandeurs; and as all the great things, which God has wrought in thee, will be forever present to our vision, they will incessantly enrapture our souls, which, in the eternal ecstasy, will unceasingly exalt and bless thee! All these praises and blessings will revert to

God, from whom emanates all that is great and divine in thee.

When, however, we will realize, O Virgin, our mother, the plenitude of all the love with which thy maternal heart was filled for us upon earth; and of all the graces thou hast lavished upon us during the whole course of our lives; when we will learn, that, at our last hour, thy hand inclined towards us the divine mercy, by throwing into the scale, for our benefit, the weight of thy motherly intercession; and that thus, we are indebted to thee, for our final perseverance and for our salvation; then will gush forth such transports of gratitude and love, as would suffice to cause our hearts to break were they not strong in the strength of God.

We will see, by the light of God, all that thou hast done at the foot of the cross to save us—all the scenes of thy martyrdom; and our hearts, for such excessive love, will strive to respond by love.

Throughout eternity, thy maternal devotion and thy innumerable benefits will be present to our souls; and we will waft towards thee our aspirations of love and gratitude. But from our own eternal inability, when without divine help, to respond to thy love and benefits, what must we do, O holy Virgin? Not possessing in ourselves the love we shall be eager to give thee, we will seek it in God, in our God, in Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Saviour; and the happiness will not be denied to us of loving thee with an infinite love. Besides the degree of love which

will pervade our hearts, as God, in heaven, gives Himself entirely to us—as Jesus Christ gives Himself entirely to us—we will offer thee the infinite and eternal love of our God, the eternal and infinite love of Jesus Christ, our Saviour; to which we will add the love of thy heart, and that of the whole celestial court. Thus our hearts will dilate with filial love, and they will love thee with all the infinite love of God—of Jesus Christ; and with all the love of thy Immaculate Heart, and with all the love of paradise. And, O holy Virgin, O tender and divine mother, the whole of eternity will be ours, in which to love thee with all this HOLY LOVE!

BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS.

The pleasing preparation for publication of the foregoing pages had scarcely been completed, when by cable telegram, it was announced, that on the 16th of April, 1879, *Bernadette Soubirous*, known in religion as Sister MARY BERNARD, had departed this life, at the Convent of Saint Gildard, in the city of Nevers, France.

How many and how varied, the inexpressible reflections and pious emotions excited by the intelligence of the death of this FAVORED CHILD of the *Queen of Heaven!*

INDEX.

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	Page
Dedication Correspondence	v
Preface	ix
Author's Declaration	xvii

FIRST PART.

Chapter.		
I.	1844—1858...How God prepares Bernadette for the mission to which He destines her	1
II.	11th February, 1858—First apparition of the most Blessed Virgin to Bernadette	8
III.	On the nature and the effects of the light and of the beauty which flash forth in Jesus Christ, in the most Blessed Virgin, and in the Saints, on the occasion of apparitions	15
IV.	February 14th, 1858—Sunday—Second apparition	25
V.	February 18th, 1858—Third apparition. The immaculate Virgin asks Bernadette to come to the Grotto for fifteen consecutive days, and she agrees to do so; memorable promise then made to Bernadette by the most Blessed Virgin	30
VI.	February 19th, 1858—Friday—Fourth apparition.—February 20th—Saturday—Fifth apparition.—Francis Soubirous and Louise Casterot behold their daughter transfigured, and believe in the truth of the miracle	35

Chapter.		Page
VII.	February 21st, 1858—First Sunday of Lent—Sixth apparition and fourth day of the fifteen. The most Blessed Virgin recommends praying for sinners...	41
VIII.	On that very day, the 21st of February, the persecution against Bernadette breaks out. Her invincible constancy. God reveals that it is He Himself who founds the pilgrimage of Lourdes.....	45
IX.	The Right Reverend Bertrand Severe Laurence, Lord Bishop of Tarbes.....	56
X.	On Monday, the 22d of February, the Virgin does not appear; sadness of Bernadette. She appears, however, on the next day, the 23d First secret which she confides to her—Message which she gives her for the Priests—Bernadette delivers this message to the Rev'd Mr. Peyramale, curate of Lourdes.....	65
XI.	Wednesday, February 24th, 1858, eighth apparition; the immaculate Virgin tells Bernadette that sinners must be prayed for, and she pronounces the word "Penance!" three times. To the request that the wild briar should be made to bloom, her only reply is a smile. Second secret. Bernadette gives an account of this vision to the curate of Lourdes. Effects of the word "Penance!" pronounced three times by the immaculate Virgin.....	73
XII.	February 25th—Thursday in the first week of Lent. Ninth apparition. Third and last secret. The miraculous Fountain of the Grotto	76
XIII.	The Fountain of the Grotto—its miraculous features. The rock struck by Moses in the desert, and the rock in the Pyrenees. Language of the Virgin to Bernadette: "Go drink, and wash yourself at the Fountain".....	80
XIV.	On the 26th of February—Friday—in the first week of Lent, the immaculate Virgin does not appear to Bernadette. Reason for which this occurred.—Why the most Blessed Virgin has already revealed the three secrets to her. Increase of the fountain. Cures effected on the morning of the 26th of February, by the use of the water of the Grotto, and the invocation of the most Blessed Virgin. On the same day, miraculous cure of Louis Bourriette, a quarry man at Lourdes.....	89

Chapter. PAGE

XV. Extending from the 26th of February to the 4th of March, 1858, which date completes the fifteen days. What it is that the most Blessed Virgin wishes to teach us by ordering Bernadette, at each apparition, to drink and wash herself at the fountain of the Grotto, and to eat of the herbs which grow by its side 99

XVI. Eternal foundations of christian confidence: infinite riches of the redemption of Jesus Christ and divine excess of His love. Superabundance of the fountain of grace which flows from His gaping side and from His wounds to redeem and save the human race. The heart of the Man-God, whence this unceasing stream of salvation issues, is always open to all men—to all sinners..... 104

XVII. The immaculate Virgin has expressed to us all what she said to Bernadette: We must pray for sinners. Then addressing herself to sinners, she added:—Penance, Penance, Penance! How we are to pray for the conversion of sinners, and how important it is for sinners to heed the most Blessed Virgin... 115

XVIII. Heaven! Infinite happiness which will be the lot of the sinner, if he become converted and die in a state of grace. Infinite loss sustained by the sinner, if he persevere in sin and die impenitent..... 119

XIX. Eternity! What eternity will be for sinners who die in sin and impenitent—in a state of revolt and warfare against God—against Christ—and against His Church 137

XX. March 4th, 1858, last day of the fortnight. More than twenty thousand persons surround the Grotto. The immaculate Virgin appears to Bernadette, ordering her to drink and wash herself at the miraculous fountain, as she had previously been commanded to do, at each apparition, since the fountain issued from the rock. She repeats the injunction that Bernadette inform the priests that she wishes a sanctuary and processions at this spot. Bernadette begs the immaculate Virgin to tell her Her name: the sole reply is a gracious smile. Her name is revealed however, on the evening of that same day, by a striking miracle 145

Chapter.		Page
XXI.	Miraculous cure of a little child of Lourdes on the evening of the last day of the fortnight	153
XXII.	On the 25th of March, 1858, Feast of the Annunciation, the most Blessed Virgin appears to Bernadette, and says to her: "I am the Immaculate Conception."	160
XXIII.	The creation of the immaculate Virgin, God's greatest masterpiece after the Incarnation of the Word. Privileges with which God favors the immaculate Virgin.	170
XXIV.	Why the apparitions of the most Blessed Virgin to Bernadette did not precede, but followed the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by Pius IX	183
XXV.	April 5th, 1858—Easter Monday—the most Blessed Virgin appears to Bernadette. Prodigy occurring whilst she is in ecstasy; the flame of the taper passes between her fingers without burning them. Nearly ten thousand persons gathered around the Grotto	189
XXVI.	June 3d, 1858—Feast of the Blessed Sacrament.—Bernadette makes her first communion in the chapel of the Hospital at Lourdes	197
XXVII.	July 16th, 1858—Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, eighteenth and last apparition of the immaculate Virgin to Bernadette. Prodigy attending this apparition	203
XXVIII.	Consideration of the growth and immensity of the graces and merits of the Blessed Virgin	210
XXIX.	Another view of the immensity of the grace enjoyed by the most Blessed Virgin, according to the testimony of the Fathers, the Doctors and the Saints	228
XXX.	Contemplation of the immensity of the glory enjoyed by the most Blessed Virgin in heaven	236

Chapter. PAGE

SECOND PART.

I. God's purpose in leaving Bernadette at Lourdes after the apparitions..... 251

II. Bernadette's life at Lourdes after the apparitions—Her fidelity in corresponding with the designs of God—Her unalterable patience in suffering. Extraordinary pain she endured on Good Friday.—Bernadette, when in a dying condition, instaneously cured by the water of the Grotto..... 256

III. Bernadette, the immaculate Virgin's witness before the public; and the immaculate Virgin, Bernadette's guardian in the midst of multitudes..... 264

IV. January 15th, 1862. Pastoral letter of the Bishop of Tarbes..... 272

V. January, 1862—Effects produced by the Pastoral letter of the Bishop of Tarbes. Ardor displayed by catholics in contributing their offerings towards the erection of the Sanctuary of the Grotto. Courage of the holy Bishop in the midst of the difficulties besetting so great an enterprise. Plan adopted, and beginning of the works in October, 1862. Bernadette and the Sculptor who is to mould the statue of the immaculate Virgin..... 287

VI. April 4th, 1864—The Bishop of Tarbes takes possession of the Grotto, and blesses the statue of the most Holy Virgin. Four hundred priests and from fifty to sixty thousand catholics present at the ceremony..... 293

VII. 1866—Bernadette called to a religious life and received into the congregation of the Sisters of Nevers. Her sentiments of gratitude to God. Letter which she writes to Mother Ursula, who was the Superior of the Hospital at Lourdes, when the apparitions occurred 300

Chapter.		Page
VIII.	May 21st, 1866—Pentecost Monday. Bishop Bertrand Severe Laurence throws open to worship the Crypt or Subterranean Church, built over the miraculous Grotto—Nearly three hundred priests and an innumerable multitude of catholics are present, and Bernadette assists at the ceremony.....	304
IX.	Last days spent by Bernadette in Lourdes. Her soul occupied by the recollection of God's mercies. Her adieu to her parents. Last visit to the Virgin of the Grotto. Bernadette at Nevers. Christian death of her father and mother.....	310
X.	Increase of the pilgrimages after the inauguration of the Crypt and establishment in 1866 of the Chaplains of the immaculate Virgin. Pilgrimage of the pupils of the Jesuits' College of Saint Mary at Toulouse, and of the students of the preparatory Seminary of Saint Pe, in the diocese of Tarbes.....	322
XI	French National Pilgrimage—October 6th, 1872.....	332
XII.	Pilgrimages of men alone.....	336
XIII.	Pilgrimage from the United States—June 2d, 1874...	343
XIV.	Some of the principal Sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes in the catholic universe. Sanctuaries in Europe.....	348
XV.	Sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes in Europe continued—Belgium—Holland—Poland	370
XVI.	Sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes in America—Canada, United States, Nicaragua, Brazil	386
XVII.	Coronation of Our Lady of Lourdes by Pius IX, on the 3d of July, 1876.....	397
XVIII.	The great miracle wrought by the most Blessed Virgin in behalf of the seven hundred Pilgrims traveling by rail from Niort to Lourdes. Monstrance prepared for the ceremony of the Coronation..	422

Chapter. PAGE

XIX. Homily by the Right Reverend Louis Edward Pie, Bishop of Poitiers..... 430

XX. Pius IX and Our Lady of Lourdes. What that great Pope did to promote the extension of devotion to the immaculate Virgin throughout the universe, and what should be the influence of his example upon every member of the catholic church..... 457

XXI. Ad Te Suspiramus, O Clemens! O Pia! O Dulcis, Virgo Maria!..... 477

Announcement of the death of Bernadette Soubirous, on the 16th April, 1879, at Nevers, France,..... 483

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4283